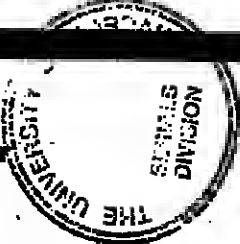
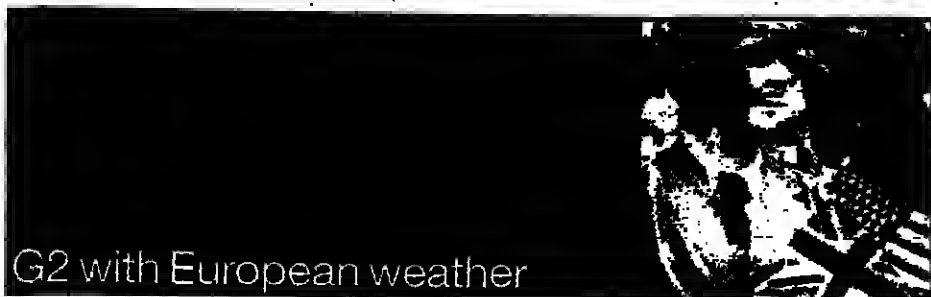


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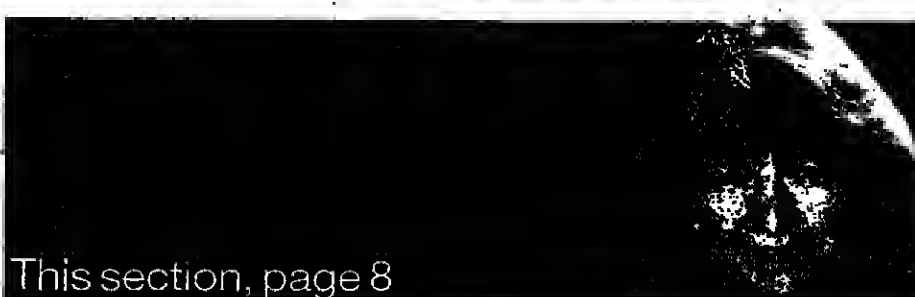


The Guardian

EUROPE



G2 with European weather



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Unnatural disasters

Britain backs hold on debt

Brown pledges £10m for aid fund

Larry Elliott, Charlotte Denny and Nick Hopkins

BITAIN yesterday called for a global moratorium on the debts of the disaster-stricken countries of Central America as efforts around the world to provide emergency aid and funds for rebuilding shattered economies gathered momentum.

With France and Spain unilaterally writing off debts from Honduras and Nicaragua, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, called for a worldwide moratorium on debt payments from the countries ravaged by Hurricane Mitch. Britain also pledged £10 million for a World Bank trust fund.

Fundraisers at the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), an amalgamation of 11 UK aid agencies which yesterday launched a mass appeal for funds, described the move as a change of heart from Mrs Short's previous dismissal of debt relief as irrelevant — as “fantastic” and a “big commitment”.

Mr Brown said: “The needs of the central American countries are now being heard throughout the world and we want to do what we can and play our full part with the rebuilding of the economies.”

In a joint letter to James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, and Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Mr Brown and Ms Short said they wanted a temporary suspension of debt service payments to the West.

Last night, the World Bank said it was still considering the call for a moratorium. A spokeswoman said: “We welcome all the international efforts and we are determined to remain flexible under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative on options for these countries in the midst of this crisis.”

Mr Brown has been in discussions with the French and the Norwegians in a bid to speed up help for Central America, and Treasury sources said they were confident that the United States could be made to the Hurricane Appeal by calling 0870 80 80 80 or 0950 22 22 33.

The World Bank announced that it was making up to £200

million available for immediate support for Central America, where the floods and landslides caused by the hurricane have left at least 11,000 dead, millions homeless and set back development by 20 years.

Mr Brown said Britain had pledged £10 million for a World Bank trust fund, and that France had promised a similar amount. Sweden offered to pour between \$50 million and £120 million into the rebuilding programme.

At the appeal launch in London, the charities involved in the DEC warned their budgets were already overstretched and that they would need \$5 million of public donations to honour the commitments they had already made.

“Most of the agencies have already spent the funds in their emergency budgets,” said a spokesman. “We have pledged money that we don’t have.” The DEC, which sits only during times of crisis, estimates that the cost of reconstruction in the flooded areas of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala will reach \$2 billion.

“The destruction of roads and bridges makes access to affected areas extremely difficult. Helicopters and small power boats are needed to distribute food and medicines,” a spokesman said.

“In Honduras alone, it is estimated that 1.5 million people are homeless,” he added. “The widespread destruction of farm land and factories also means that many survivors have lost their only source of income. This appeal is in response to the worst natural disaster to hit the region in a century.”

The charities making up the DEC include Action Aid, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Christian Care International, UK and the British Red Cross.

“This is a chance for ordinary Britons to support the poorest people in Central America,” said Jenny Borden, overseas director of Christian Aid.

The British Red Cross has already flown a first consignment consisting mostly of water tanks, purification tablets and blankets to the region.

A DEC spokeswoman said the Government’s offer would show a “real lead to other countries.”

“We raised £10 million for Sudan and the needs here are as great if not greater. Twenty years of development has been washed away,” Christian Aid is shipping further supplies this week, the DEC said.

Tony Burdon, Oxfam’s policy advisor, said the moratorium on debt repayments would provide a “well-needed breathing space” but called for “substantial and urgent investment in reconstruction.”

The DEC said donations could be made to the Hurricane Appeal by calling 0870 80 80 80 or 0950 22 22 33.

Crowded villages, page 7



EXTRAORDINARY scenes greeted the arrival at court yesterday of former city whizz-kid Peter Young dressed as a woman in a skirt and high heels. As the one-time Morgan Grenfell fund manager left the City of London Magistrates Court, a scrum of photographers pressed around him, eager for pictures of his apparent transformation.

He faces seven fraud-related charges in connection with the unit-trust scandal that cost Morgan’s parent Deutsche Bank \$400 million, and was bailed with no surety by City of London magistrates to appear in February. Full story, page 12.

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL BATES

Film censor says he should have cut ‘irresponsible’ Pulp Fiction

Rory Carroll

BITAIN’S chief film censor last night stunned liberal allies by saying he wished he had cut Pulp Fiction, claiming its depiction of drug use had increased the number of young people injecting heroin.

Quentin Tarantino’s 1994 box-office hit was a socially irresponsible glorification of drug abuse which should never have been screened uncut, said James Ferman, director of the British Board of Film Classification.

Crossing the battle-lines to side with conservative critics, Mr Ferman said some cinema-goers were likely to have tried to emulate John Travolta’s character. “Travolta shoots up heroin, drives along blissfully happy, picks up Uma Thurman, the most beautiful young woman in the film, goes dancing and wins the dancing competition.”

If Mr Ferman could wind back the clock he would recommend cutting some scenes, even though it would damage a “wonderful” film.

“I’m more concerned now than I was then that there has been an increase in injecting heroin.”



John Travolta playing a heroin user in Pulp Fiction

Some anti-drug campaigners welcomed Pulp Fiction because of its scene where Travolta revives an overdosed Thurman by plunging a needle into her chest, but Mr Ferman believes young people would have concluded they should avoid stupidity, not heroin.

“Thurman snorted it by mistake. Travolta used it properly and had a great time.”

The BBFC insisted on cutting one close-up shot of a

by his U-turn.

Mary Whitehouse, the veteran pro-censorship campaigner, said she was glad.

“It takes a certain amount of courage to come out and admit he was wrong.”

“It needs people with courage to keep control of this medium. The effects, especially on young vulnerable people, can be severe.”

Michael Fabricant, a Conservative member of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport committee, said that having seen the movie he thought Mr Ferman had nothing to feel guilty about.

“This was a wild off-the-wall comedy and I can’t imagine that anyone would be tempted to make a movie on heroin, just as they wouldn’t be tempted to blow off a friend’s head with a Magnum in a car — a scene which also appeared in the film.”

Steve Rolles, campaign co-ordinator for Transform: the campaign for effective drug policy, said Mr Ferman was right the first time and wrong this time.

“The film should not have been cut. People on the whole do drugs because they enjoy it. If films only showed people doing drugs and not enjoying it it wouldn’t be honest.”

Lords back cannabis use for patients suffering pain

Sarah Boseley
Health Correspondent

DOCTORS should be legally allowed to prescribe cannabis for multiple sclerosis sufferers and other patients who find it helps relieve pain, says a report from a scientific committee of the House of Lords, published today.

The report was hailed as courageous by patients who buy the drug on the streets and smoke it in fear of the law.

Its findings were backed by pharmacists, but rejected by the British Medical Association, representing doctors. Government departments promptly let it be known that they would not lift the ban on a drug that has not undergone clinical trials.

The House of Lords select committee on Science and Technology accepted the lack of “rigorous scientific evidence” for the pain-relieving properties of cannabis. But said the chairman, Lord Perry of Walton, they were making their recommendation “primarily for compassionate reasons”.

As a Schedule 1 drug, cannabis is deemed to have no therapeutic value, and is not available to medicine. The Lords want it moved to Schedule 2, which would mean pharmacists could supply it and doctors could prescribe it, although it would not be licensed.

Lord Perry, one of the majority of well-respected scientists and academics on the committee, said that “the evidence that it relieves pain, especially neurological pain, is quite convincing”, even though most of it is anecdotal.

Although serious clinical trials will begin in January, Lord Perry said it would take five years before cannabis or its derivatives would be licensed as a medicine.

“We consider there is sufficient evidence of medicinal benefit to many patients to make it unjustifiable and inhumane to make them wait so long,” he said.

Since the only effective way to deliver cannabis to the brain swiftly is through smoking it at the moment, the Lords are even prepared to countenance its prescription for use in a joint, although they urged research into inhalation and other methods.

They urged the Government to take a lead in Europe and reschedule cannabis now, but the Department of Health and the Home Office poured cold water on the idea. “The Government would not be prepared to countenance any movement to allow prescription before clinical trials and safety tests have been concluded,” said a Home Office spokeswoman. The Department of Health said that any drug to be used in patient treatment must be licensed by the Medicines Control Agency “and you can’t do that with a Schedule 1 drug”.

But the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, which will be running the trials in January, agrees with the Lords, as long as a standardised cannabis product can be produced — not a weed which can vary in strength.

Clare Hodges, from the Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics, who suffers from multiple sclerosis herself, said she was delighted with the report. “I think they have shown great compassion and great bravery,” she said.

Sir William Ascher, chairman of the BMA’s Board of Science and Education, said he understood the Lords’ humanitarian motives but could not support them. “Crude cannabis is a toxic mixture of more than 60 cannabinoids and other ingredients,” he said.

Out on a limb, page 5
Leader comment, page 8

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UK news

Children as young as five might be asked to sign contracts promising to obey school rules and do their homework.

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International

The EU has opened negotiations with six new member states in a process which could push its border to the Black Sea coast.

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Our e-mail address for editorial comments is guardian@guardian.co.uk

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In G2 Europe Society pages: Flood, famine, fire: natural catastrophes are on the increase

+ This year's Booker Prize winner Ian McEwan says the fate of rural England is entwined with the future of our cities

One in five JPs say they are Masons

Irvine tells MPs of judges' anger at questionnaires

Nicholas Watt
Political Correspondent

UP to one in five male magistrates are Freemasons, according to figures disclosed yesterday by Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor. In a survey of the judiciary in England and Wales, 13.6 per cent of male magistrates declared that they were Freemasons, while 5.4 per cent of magistrates as a whole refused to disclose whether they were Masons.

Chris Mullin, the chairman of the Commons Home Affairs Committee which is pressing for greater openness in the judiciary, said: "A figure of one in five, with no doubt significant regional variations, is not unrealistic."

Lord Irvine told Mr Mullin's committee that out of 26,000 magistrates sent questionnaires, 1,097 (6.8 per cent) said they were Freemasons. He said this could be doubled to 13.6 per cent because half of all magistrates are women, who cannot be Freemasons.

The Lord Chancellor added that 867 magistrates (5.4 per cent) had refused to say whether they were Freemasons, while 13,962 (87 per cent) of all magistrates said that they were not. Of the 26,000 questionnaires sent out, 15,926 magistrates (61 per cent) have responded.

In an attempt to introduce greater transparency into the judiciary, Lord Irvine's department sent out questionnaires in July to magistrates and judges in England and Wales, ranging from the Lord Chief Justice to part time judges, asking them to declare their "Masonic status".

Of the judges, 247 (4.9 per cent) said that they were Freemasons. The Lord Chancellor said that 61 judges had declined to say whether they were Masons. In all, 5,033 judges and part-time judges have returned their forms out of 5,290 questionnaires sent out.

Lord Irvine told the committee that a judge might have to stand down from a trial if he knew that the defendant was a fellow Freemason. But the Lord Chancellor said that he was not alarmed by the "relatively small" number of Freemasons among judges.

There are an estimated 380,000 Freemasons in Britain, under 2 per cent of the adult male population.

Lord Irvine conceded that his survey had ruffled feathers among the judiciary. When the register is published in full, the names of each judge will appear in a register stating whether they answered Yes or No to the question: "Are you a Freemason?"

He said: "There is no doubt that among a certain quota in the judiciary this has caused very very considerable resentment. I have a postbag to prove it... I certainly do not regard it as my job never to tread on judicial toes."

Lord Irvine sent out the questionnaires after the United Grand Lodge refused to supply names of judges who are Freemasons. Lord Millett, a Law Lord who is the most senior Freemason in the judiciary, branded the compulsory disclosure as an "invasion of privacy".

The Lord Chancellor hailed the survey as a sign of how he is opening up judicial appointments. But he indicated that he is shelving Labour's plans to set up a Judicial Appointments Commission. He said the commission could be a "controversial" move which could be open to charges of political influence.

"I have not ruled it out," Lord Irvine said. Asked by David Winnick, Labour MP for Walsall North, whether he had not ruled it in, Lord Irvine said: "That is right."

On recruitment of women and ethnic minorities to the judiciary, Lord Irvine said: "I have to say that I doubt if any Lord Chancellor has tried as hard as I have done to encourage women and members of the ethnic minorities to apply."

Melanie Johnson, a Labour member of the committee and a magistrate, said she was surprised by the high number of male magistrates who are Freemasons. "That is something we will need to look at," she welcomed Lord Irvine's survey. "I am not out to stop people who are Freemasons becoming magistrates. But details of magistrates who are Masons need to be available publicly."



Lord Irvine in 'the full kit' as Lord Chancellor... "I feel that for male adults of sound mind, like myself, the days of breeches, tight and buckled shoes ought to go," he told the Commons Home Affairs Committee he wanted to be able to take part in debates "free of my outer garments and my wig"

Off with the outer garments — and millions in legal aid

Sketch

Simon Hoggart

THE Lord Chancellor appeared before the Home Affairs Committee in House of Commons Room 6. As he arrived, surrounded by a phalanx of no fewer than eight civil servants, I gazed up at the massive group portrait on the wall.

It shows Gladstone's Cabinet of 1868. Fifteen men, all superb in mutton chop whiskers, several of them dukes. I wondered how many of them were gay.

"Fargiter, it says in the Morning Chronicle that I have been 'outed'. What in damnation does that mean?"

"It means, ahem, Your Grace, that you are not as other men are."

"You blithering idiot, of course I'm not as other men are. I'm a duke."

Lord Irvine took his seat with immeasurable dignity. He was wearing a blue suit, a blue shirt and a blue tie, plus a scarlet poppy to match his scarlet face.

He looked cheerful. Unlike the occasion of his last appearance before a select committee, he knew he was unlikely to be asked about his wallpaper.

Presumably, he leaves all that to the Master of the Rolls (who must also keep his magnificently restored toilet replenished).

The first topic was legal aid and how it can be more fairly dished out. The Lord Chancellor moved straight into management-speak. "Our basic vision is of a network of quality providers, supported by co-ordinated funding delivery services," he said.

He may be looking for a job at the BBC.

"Improved focus and co-ordination of funding... improved standards through achieving a more standard means of evaluating service quality..."

On and on he went with this gobbledeygook. Did his most famous predecessor, St Thomas More, ever talk like this? I don't think so.

The subtext, as always, was money. Reducing the cost of legal aid is all very well, pro-

vided it can be done without reducing lawyers' fees. Marsha Singh (Lab, Bradford W) wondered if there was any possibility of a reduction in the amount the public had to pay for legal aid.

"Getting a reduction is not the point," said the Lord Chancellor. "It is a matter of getting the budget under control." Translation: the gravy train will continue to call at all the bins of Court.

He announced that the cost of legal aid was now £16 million a year.

To an old cynic like me this sounded roughly the amount that would keep a single chambers in claret.

Moments later, he was back. "I may have inadvertently said £16 million a year. Of course the correct figure is £1,600 millions."

Phew. That's more like it. They can afford a few cases of champagne as well.

Moments later MPs were on to the really important question, which was the Lord Chancellor's wig.

"It weighs a ton," he said. He had nothing against wearing "the full kit" on state occasions, "but I feel that for male adults of sound mind, like myself, the days of breeches, tight and buckled shoes ought to go."

He wanted, he said, to be able to take part in debates "free of my outer garments and my wig".

A frisson ran round the room as members of the committee pondered the image of Lord Irvine free of his outer garments.

Soon afterwards he announced that he had decided that applicants for high judicial office should not have to declare their sexuality. An MP asked if they ever had had to declare this, and he replied that there had been a question on the form which was clearly meant to elicit the information.

It was curiously phrased. Applicants had to declare "if there is anything in your private life which, if it were to become public, would be of possible embarrassment to the Lord Chancellor".

Why to him? The correct answer would be: "Yes, I met him once on Clapham Common and freed him from his outer garments..." Now that would be embarrassing.

Unbelievably, still kissing records

Review

Dave Simpson

Blondie
Wolverhampton Civic Hall

IN THE Christmas edition of New Musical Express, 1978, Blondie's Picture This single sleeve (on which Debbie Harry was pictured French kissing a thin record) was pasted as a cartoon. Underneath a wart and wrinkle-ridden caricature of Harry were the words "Wonder if she'll still be kissing records in 20 years time". The joke was funny only because the idea that Blondie would be doing anything in 20 years apart from enjoying retirement in baths of champagne was preposterous — almost as preposterous as the fact that, 16 years from their last Brits date, Blondie are back. They have a sellout tour, an album, No Exit, out in February and an ardent following. Hordes came to pay homage to one of America's classic pop groups, including scores of teenage blondes and, unforgettably, a gawping punk in a leather jacket sprayed "Debbie Harry", who was easily 45.

As Dreaming and Hanging on the Telephone drifted wistfully, fabulously forward, the years melted away as they appear to have done from Harry's figure and face. Not long ago, she was a bloated bulk of her former immaculacy, reduced to wearing only lingerie onstage. Now she seems peculiarly resilient. Whether by miracles of science, diet, lighting or even modern corsetry, at 53 Harry is absurdly, unfathomably, al-

most illegally, sexy.

Sensibly, Debs realises that to age her younger self would be ridiculous, so she has reinvented herself as a matronly temptress. Harry's face (once described as a "magnificent blank"), like her figure, is now flawed, but age adds an outrageous debauchery to her come-ons. Safari blouse dangerously undone (and skirt belt suspiciously tightened) the original platinum-selling blonde pouted, blew kisses, daddled with her bra strap and generally reduced men old enough to know better to pathetic, quivering wrecks.

The music wasn't bad either. Most of the hits (and you'd forgotten how many they had) sounded fresher than yesterday because somehow (it must be the tight suits) Blondie retain an edginess many younger bands lack. The urgency of Clem Burke — one of few stickmen able to transform the music he is playing — fought for the attention with Chris Stein's razorblade guitar slashes, Jimmy Destri's keyboard whirrs and Debbie's proudly high-mixed Memorex voice.

Far from being a mere nostalgia show, the set showed with Forgive and Forget and other super newbies that these old stagers retain a grasp of stiletto-sharp pop. They flagged slightly towards the end, although this owed more to playing more dated-sounding early numbers than to failing stamina.

As it was, Denis Atomic, Rapture and a ravishing Heart of Glass prompted a level of applause not heard for many a year. "I can't believe it either," Harry confessed as someone, somewhere, took her song's advice and told her she wasn't dreaming.

Climate talks near collapse

Former US negotiator blames White House for 'false targets'

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent
in Buenos Aires

THE global Climate Change Convention was on the verge of collapse last night after a warning from a former United States chief negotiator that the Americans cannot achieve the cuts in greenhouse gas emissions which they promised a year ago.

Robert Reinstein, the architect of the convention, said he was speaking out for the first time because "it is all going wrong". He said: "I am deeply saddened because this thing is close to my heart but the US has taken on unrealistic targets it cannot achieve. It will cause embarrassment, nasty recriminations and discredit the whole international treaty process."

Mr Reinstein, who was chief US negotiator for both

the Earth Summit and the Montreal Protocol on protecting the ozone layer, was speaking as politicians from 180 countries were arriving in the Argentine capital to try to get the talks moving again after 10 days of negotiations.

He said he had warned the US vice-president, Al Gore, before the deal was agreed in Kyoto last year that the legally binding target was not achievable but his advice was ignored.

"I told him person to person the numbers just did not add up, but he would not listen. Now we will have to pay the price," Mr Reinstein said.

The problem for the US is that its carbon dioxide emissions have increased dramatically since the 1990 baseline used in the convention for measuring greenhouse gases.

The White House has signed up to cuts of 7 per cent on 1990 levels by 2010 but is already 13 per cent above the

1990 levels. Because of economic growth, the US government expects its emissions to grow 30 per cent on 1990 levels by 2010.

Mr Reinstein said: "To cut prospective emissions by 37 per cent in 10 years is practically and politically impossible."

The warning came as John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, was meeting the Argentine president, Carlos Menem. Mr Prescott arrived yesterday to be told by his officials that almost no progress had been made in the first 10 days of talks. One of the officials said: "We are hoping for some fireworks from Prescott, otherwise the talks will be seen as a failure."

After his meeting with Mr Menem, Mr Prescott said there was still much to do to make Buenos Aires a success, "but that is what politicians are for".

Commenting on the gloomy forecast by the former chief negotiator he said: "There are lots of 'ifs' in Mr Reinstein's predictions. He has got his set

but there others you could follow. What is certain is that to do nothing is not an option. If the Americans do half of what they should then it is better than nothing."

Mr Prescott said he believed that US industry was getting geared up to deal with climate change. There was a lot of hope that new technology would make a difference, he said.

Mr Menem is due to open the political part of the meeting today.

Mr Reinstein's view is that even if a deal is stitched up to permit carbon trading between developed countries and additional credits from third world countries by transferring low emission technology, it will still not be enough to save the treaty.

Nick Mabey, for the World Wide Fund for Nature, said: "Mr Reinstein is very pessimistic about the desire of the American public to deal with climate change. A recent poll showed 71 per cent of the public disapproved of congressional efforts to block emission controls."

Kennedy brain examinations add to cover-up theories

Julian Borger
in Washington

A NEW United States government report on President Kennedy's assassination has concluded that there is evidence "strongly suggesting" that the medical examination of the president's brain was deliberately falsified to disguise the nature of his gunshot wounds.

The report, compiled by the Assassinations Records Review Board (ARRB), suggests that the brain photographed and an-

alysed in the official archives was not President Kennedy's, but another, more intact brain, substituted about a week after the assassination.

The report, released on Monday, has reignited the controversy surrounding the president's death. It adds weight to conspiracy theorists' claims that the bullet which killed the president was fired from the front, not by Lee Harvey Oswald from the back, and that the evidence pointing to the presence of another gunman in Dallas was covered up.

Douglas Horne, the review board's chief analyst for military records who wrote the report, said yesterday: "My overall conclusion is that it clearly looks like the president was shot from the front, and that the evidence was covered up."

He said the inquiry found evidence that two brain examinations took place, one of the real brain on November 25 hours before the state funeral, the second of the substitute brain in late November or early December.

The photograph at the

first examination, John Springer, testified that he did not take the photographs in the national archives.

An FBI agent, Francis O'Neill, who was also present at the initial autopsy, said the relatively intact brain shown in the official photographs, which showed only a small amount of material missing from the frontal lobes, could not have been the president's which had "more than half" missing from the back — consistent with the exit wound of a bullet entering from the front.

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David Bontle (above) and Alan Thomas: among those killed when gunmen attacked the Yetwene mine



Workers form a production line at an Angolan diamond mine. There have been several kidnappings of foreign mine staff

PHOTOGRAPH: HARRIET LOGAN

Britons killed in Angola mine raid

Troops comb countryside for gunmen and foreigners taken hostage at diamond concession

Chris Gordon, Will Woodward and Reuter in Johannesburg

TROOPS and police yesterday combed north-east Angola for a British mining engineer and three other foreign workers abducted by gunmen during a raid on a Canadian-owned diamond mine in which two Britons were killed.

The dead Britons were named yesterday by the mining company. DiamondWorks, as David Bontle, aged 26, from Bracknell, Berkshire, and Alan Thomas, aged 48, a mine manager from Liverpool, west Yorkshire.

Another, Jason Pope, aged 26, from Devon, was among the four workers kidnapped. A fourth Briton, believed to be Robin Barton, aged 52, escaped unhurt and is now in the Angolan capital, Luanda.

Unidentified gunmen attacked the mine at Yetwene, a village about 370 miles east of Luanda, before dawn on Sunday, killing five employees and wounding 18 others, according to DiamondWorks.

The prime suspect for the attack, Angola's Unita rebel movement, claimed yesterday to be investigating the report. A senior aide to the Unita leader Jonas Savimbi, speaking from the rebels' central highland headquarters at Andulo, told Reuters: "We are

investigating this matter to ascertain what happened, who was involved and what was the motive. Our chief of staff will come back to us with a report that will put us in the clear picture at the events at the diamond mine."

DiamondWorks had one brief contact with the kidnappers on Monday when company representatives tried the hand-held radios staff carry. The gunmen refused to talk beyond saying, "We are taking them away now."

The kidnapping of expatriate miners appears to be a reversion to the guerrilla tactics Unita used in the mid-1980s to shut down Angola's diamond industry.

DiamondWorks has links to the Angolan president, José Eduardo Dos Santos, and contacts with the elite. It is trying a range of channels to recover the hostages, according to a director, Michael Grundberg. He told the Guardian, "Our priority is to get our people back."

The remote Yetwene mining region is in the rolling river valleys and grasslands of Luanda Norte. The nearest big military base is 60 miles south. It took DiamondWorks almost two years to get Unita and other illegal miners out of its Yetwene concession. The attack may be a message to foreign investors in Angola that no one is safe.

DiamondWorks is one of the most controversial min-

ing companies in Angola. Tony Buckingham, a former director, brokered the introductions of South African mercenaries Executive Outcomes into Sierra Leone, Angola and Papua New Guinea.

David Bontle's father Chris, aged 50, said yesterday: "He did speak to us about the risks but David was the sort of person who made up his own mind. He saw his career in diamond mining and seemed to think it was a well-run organisation. He would not take suicidal risks but he had a spirit of adventure."

"He was very bright, extremely intelligent and determined. It is such a dreadful waste."

The mother of hostage Jason Pope said last night she believed that her son might be able to negotiate his release. Geneva Pope said: "If anyone is going to come out of the alive it is him. He has the right emotional attitude and the right personality to come through."

This year that Angola's diamond industry is the world's fourth-largest producer, but one anecdote highlights the way wealth and poverty exist side by side. A traveller recently told how, in the north-east, he was approached by a dealer, who produced a satchel of shiny pebbles.

"How do I know they are diamonds?" asked the traveller. "They could be bits of broken glass." The dealer looked at him with astonishment. "We haven't had

Glitter of gemstones brings nothing but trouble to Africa's war-ravaged 'wild west'

Dan Atkinson, Chris Gordon and David Beresford

ANGOLA's half-million square miles are packed with the most alluring and least useful commodity on earth — gem diamonds. They litter the seabed, sit just below the ground and can practically be fished from rivers. But in the quarter-century since Portugal scuttled out of its former colony, all that these sparklers have brought the country is trouble.

Two huge armies use diamond dollars to fight one of the longest-running civil wars in the world. And the glitter of gems has made Angola a magnet for every crook and soldier of fortune on earth. Not for nothing are the Angolan diamond fields known as Africa's "wild west".

This stricken country is the world's fourth-largest producer, but one anecdote highlights the way wealth and poverty exist side by side. A traveller recently told how, in the north-east, he was approached by a dealer, who produced a satchel of shiny pebbles.

"How do I know they are diamonds?" asked the traveller. "They could be bits of broken glass." The dealer looked at him with astonishment. "We haven't had

glass in this town for five years."

Constantly interacting with the ebb and flow of the gemstone industry is Angola's two decade-old civil war, which rumbles on, racking up countless deaths on top of the thousands already buried in the struggle between the legitimate government, the Movement of the People for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and rivals in Unita, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Once, cold-war ideology separated the leftist MPLA from the pro-Western Unita. No longer. Now it is simply a war.

Angola is one of the most heavily landmined countries on earth. The latest United Nations peace-making mission, launched in the high summer, proved futile.

There were indications this year that Angola's diamond regions were calming down. Unita moved out of a mining region that had made it at least \$2.5 billion. Smuggling of Unita diamonds to world markets played havoc with gemstone prices during the mid-1990s and the profits allowed Unita to build up what is believed to be a sizeable investment portfolio. Illegal open-cast diggings are like termites' nests, and they often lead to tragedy,

with desperate miners being buried alive.

The legal mines are far better organised, but life can still be hard. Small mining towns and camps are home to the expatriate miners, engineers and geologists who run the developing industry. The expat existence is sparse. Beer is the main diversion, along with satellite television. The working week lasts seven days, with 24-hour operations.

Talk of "private armies" ring-fencing their own mines has been exaggerated. Nevertheless, Angola is a happy hunting ground for adventurers, with former South African military personnel strongly represented. There are huge security expenses for the diamond mines, expenses that can total \$300,000 a month, with a similar figure for the transport of supplies and equipment.

Kidnappings of foreigners are routine, and Britons are often caught up. Two were among the 150 foreigners kidnapped in Andulo in March 1996 and marched to Jamba, Unita's HQ in the south, before being released.

But however much turmoil the civil war causes for individuals and companies, its re-ignition has come to the rescue of the world diamond industry. Illicit diamond production is falling as the fighting escalates — there are fewer illegal miners in the east, and dealers are having problems finding enough rough stones to buy.

Children of 5 face school contracts

John Carvel Education Editor

CHILDREN as young as five might be asked to sign contracts promising to follow school rules on homework and good behaviour, under a government scheme launched yesterday.

Ministers think pupils should be encouraged to commit themselves to educational goals as soon as they are able to understand them.

Contracts for younger children might be limited to a promise to follow basic rules such as talking quietly and being friendly but the wording could become more specific for older age groups.

Teaching unions immediately condemned the scheme for creating "a mountainous pile of bureaucracy" for schools.

The Government said there was no question of children being refused admission or expelled if they would not agree the contract — or subsequently broke it.

The announcement came as David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, issued national guidelines on home-school agreements that will come into force in September next year, building on the voluntary arrangements that already exist in many areas.

Although schools will retain discretion over attendance times, the amount of homework set at different ages and other factors affecting discipline and ethos, they will be obliged to spell out these policies to pupils' families.

The agreement will not be legally binding and may not include clauses requiring a financial contribution from the parents or any waiver of their rights to object to the child wearing school uniform for religious reasons.

Mr Blunkett said: "The agreements will cover the ethos of the school, attendance, discipline, homework and information the schools and parents should give each other. In signing these agreements, parents will be acknowledging the essential partnership needed between them and the school to educate their child."

Charles Clarke, the schools minister, said some schools already encouraged children as young as five to sign up to policies on combating bully-

ing. "The more likely that children are to commit themselves to a particular approach, the more likely it is to work effectively."

Although pupils would not be required to sign the home-school agreement, in many cases they would want to commit themselves to the approach set out in the document, he said.

The contract plans immediately drew stinging criticism. Margaret Morrissey, spokeswoman for the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, said: "There is no way a little child would be able to even understand what such a contract is all about when they are hardly able to read and write. The last thing we should be doing is killing off the enjoyment and fun of learning by imposing formal agreements like this."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the agreements would be "a bureaucratic imposition on schools that will interfere with existing home-school arrangements without adding to the support that parents already give to schools."

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said the introduction of contracts would add nothing to parents' understanding of school policy set out in its prospectus. "Instead it creates a mountainous pile of bureaucracy involving as many as 16 million pieces of paper." Agreements should be limited to pupils who were showing signs of seriously going off the rails.

But the Government's plans were welcomed by David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers. "We appreciate there are reservations about the effectiveness of non-enforceable home-school agreements in dealing with those parents who are indifferent to, or even hostile about, the need for close liaison between school and home. But it is better to have a home-school agreement supported by the vast majority of parents than nothing at all," he said.

Mr Blunkett also published homework guidelines and promised to increase spending on after-school clubs to £220 million by 2002. He recommended 10 minutes daily homework for 5-7 year olds, rising to 90-150 minutes for 14-16 year olds.

The school contract

The Government's guidance on home-school agreements included a model contract used by All Saints C.E. Primary School, Wolverhampton.

School will:
Encourage children to do their best at all times.
Encourage children to take care of their surroundings and others around them.
Inform parents of the children's progress at regular meetings.
When parents about what the teachers aim to teach the children each term.
Teacher's signature

Family will:
Make sure child arrives at school on time: 8.55am for Juniors, 9am for Seniors.
Make sure child attends regularly and provides a note of explanation if child is absent.
Attend open evenings to discuss child's progress, one each term.
When possible, attend achievement assembly, when own child has been chosen.
Parent's signature

Child will keep the school's golden rules:

I will take care of the equipment and building.
I will walk inside the building.
I will talk quietly.
I will be friendly.
I will keep my hands and feet to myself.
I will be helpful.
Child's signature

Together we will:
Tackle any special needs.
Encourage the children to keep to the school's golden rules.
Support child's learning to help them achieve their best.

Media abandon Boycott after assault verdict

Jon Henley in Paris and Vivek Chaudhary

BOFFEY Boycott was fast turning into a sporting outcast last night as a number of media organisations dropped one of the most respected voices in cricket following confirmation of his conviction in a French court for beating up his girlfriend.

Boycott, who was given a three month suspended sentence and fined \$5,000 for his attack on Margaret Moore in October 1996, had his contract with the Sun newspaper, for

which he wrote a cricket column, terminated last night. Doubts have also been thrown over his work with the BBC and Trans World International (TWI), a sports broadcasting company.

A spokesman for the Sun said: "Our readers would find repugnant the idea of us employing someone with a conviction for violence against women."

Earlier this year, the BBC dropped him from its Test match commentary team following publicity surrounding the case. Boycott was reinstated pending an appeal.

A spokeswoman said last

night: "Geoffrey Boycott is not under contract to the BBC and there are no plans to use him in the future."

The former England captain's future with TWI, for which he was in Pakistan when the verdict was announced in the French southern town of Grasse, is also in jeopardy. A spokeswoman said: "Geoffrey Boycott has just finished working for us in Pakistan and at the moment there's no more work coming up."

In total, he stands to lose around \$250,000 in contracts, on top of the \$250,000 he spent on fighting his case.

Last night Boycott said he would appeal against his conviction. Speaking from Pakistan, he said: "I am very disappointed with the court's decision. But in view of the way the trial was conducted, I suppose it is not a total surprise."

Boycott was also ordered to pay a symbolic one franc in damages to Ms Moore, who accused him of punching her up to 20 times in the face during a row over a rowing boat. The presiding magistrate, Dominique Haumont-Daumas, said in her ruling that Boycott had failed to convince

the court that Ms Moore, aged 45, had received her injuries in a fall. "The accused's arguments did not support the theory of an accidental fall that he said happened," she said.

Ms Haumont-Daumas was sharply critical of the Yorkshireman's behaviour in court and said he had wrecked his image as "perfect gentleman". "The accused did not hesitate to rudely interrupt Ms Moore's barrister, thereby somewhat tarnishing the image of the perfect gentleman which he had brought his old friends and witnesses to testify to."

Boycott, aged 58, had flown 13 witnesses, including six women, to the south of France to attest to his good character. But Ms Moore, a divorced mother of two, insisted the commentator held her down and punched her in the face with "eyes wild, piercing and manic" during a blazing row at a hotel in Antibes.

Ms Moore said she was "absolutely delighted" with the verdict: "Justice has been done — it's great news. He beat me and attacked me and the French justice system has recognised that. He blackened my eyes and tried to run a smear campaign against my name."

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Robertson considers US system to increase ethnic minority recruits □ Black general says officers responsible for rooting out discrimination

Military 'must wage war' on racism

Richard Norton-Taylor

GENERAL Colin Powell, the hawkish former chief of the US defence staff who rose to world notice during the Gulf war, yesterday called on Britain's armed forces to wage a crusade against racism and placed the responsibility for rooting it out squarely on the shoulders of senior officers.

Invited by George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, to help instil a culture of equal opportunities and eradicate racial harassment and discrimination in the military, General Powell told a Ministry of Defence conference in London: "It is not policies or programmes which will get you to your goal, it will be the commanders and leaders who take this on as a central mission."

In an unscripted, one-hour speech directed at an audience of military personnel, he described initiatives taken years ago in the US, but only now being adopted and considered in Britain.

They included special training sessions, zero tolerance campaigns, and close monitoring of the performance and attitudes of senior officers. "In America, any overt expression of racism was absolutely crushed," he said.

Mr Robertson referred to a passage in General Powell's autobiography, "My career should serve as a model to fellow blacks, in or out of the



General Powell: career should serve as model

military." But while in the US, blacks flocked to the armed forces to prove their worth, in Britain the problem was the reverse.

Only 1 per cent of Britain's sailors, soldiers, and airmen come from ethnic minorities which make up 8 per cent of the general population. They include just one Asian RAF group captain, one Asian Royal Navy commander, and three black and Asian colonels in the army.

An attempt to recruit more has been sabotaged by examples of racial harassment and abuse, readily acknowledged yesterday by General Sir Charles Guthrie, chief of the defence staff.

He called for a "war on racism" and said there should be zero tolerance. However, as

an example of how far Britain has to go to meet US standards, he said there was no formal reporting systems assessing the record of officers and NCOs.

Mr Robertson said later he was considering introducing a US-style system. "We want to see armed forces which truly reflect our increasingly multi-cultural society and one in which women, as well as men, have every opportunity to progress."

Sir Herman Ouseley, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, told the conference that two years ago he was in a "state of war" with the Ministry of Defence. But progress had led to Sir Charles being presented with an award for promoting equal opportunities.

The task now, military sources say, is for the message to filter down to the barracks, messes, and parade ground.

The issue of gays and lesbians in the armed forces had proved "very difficult" for the US, General Powell said earlier. The statutory "don't ask, don't tell" policy, with gays and lesbians admitted to the armed forces so long as they kept their sexual orientation secret, had so far worked.

Mr Robertson said after the meeting that Britain's present ban — which is likely to be challenged by an expected European Court of Human Rights judgment — will be the subject of free vote in the Commons before the end of this parliament.



A Household Cavalry horse getting a warmer welcome in Brixton yesterday than the soldiers' 'equal opportunities' recruiting drive. PHOTOGRAPH: TONY MELVILLE

Euros hand-out to shoppers has a £10 sting in the tail

David Ward

COOPLANDS, Rotherham's family bakers, were having nothing to do with this funny money: large cheese curd tarts sitting succulently in the shop window were advertised at the where-there's-much-there's-brass Yorkshire price of £1.05. Take it or leave it.

But across the way, Allsports had plunged deeply into dual pricing, with white trainers with luminous yellow stripes for sale at 28.55 euros (or £39.99).

The two prices didn't quite add up: at the present rate of exchange (one Euro equals 79p), the alternative price ought to have been about 57 euros.

"I know, I got it wrong," said the assistant. "I was doing it at half past eight last night. And it's the only mistake I made. And no, you can't have the trainers for 28.55 euros (£19.99)."

If you thought Gordon Brown's euro was confusing, you should try the Rotherham version. The town has decided to be in the vanguard of Britain's shift to the single currency, educating

business leaders and shoppers about the revolution that begins in 11 European Union countries (but not the UK) on January 1.

"Rotherham has benefited from money from Europe. There is a lot of support here for the European philosophy," said Julie Kenny, president of the chamber of commerce.

Baroness Symons, a minister dispatched up North

'I'm against the euro anyway ... I don't want to be taken over by the Germans'

from the Foreign Office, said the scheme was terrific. All around her, enthusiasts were handing out Rotherham euros, vouchers bearing a picture of the parish church and worth 50p. The snag was that they had to be used by the end of this week and are valid only in certain shops with purchases over £10.

This point took some time to dawn but when it did,

there was trouble. "I have to spend £10? Well, that's what I think of that!" said shopper Linda Page as she tore her euro in half with a flourish.

"I'm against the euro anyway," said her friend Ethel Manewell. "I don't want to be taken over by the Germans."

Not everyone was quite so negative. Many accepted the offer of a free coffee in the Rendezvous Cafe, which had hedged its bets by serving both croissants and baked goods. It was also offering fish, chips, peas, bread and butter and tea for the special offer price of five euros.

Euroclan was offering to clean four garments for 15 euros and Jack Finton (Famous For Frozen Value) had Mexican chicken for 99p (big red letters) or 1.41 euros (little black letters).

Even car park charges were euro-friendly. Bodycare, heavy with the odour of perfumes and unguents, had put up a poster but gone no further. "Dual pricing?" said an aide behind the counter. "I don't give me any more complications before Christmas. I've got enough on."

Heseltine wades into Tory EU war

Ewen MacAskill and Michael White

THE Conservatives plunged back into their civil war over Europe yesterday when the former deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, warned William Hague to watch his back after a barely-disguised attack on his Euro-strategy from the exiled darling of the Tory right, Michael Portillo.

After making a coded critique of Mr Hague's policy — ruling out membership of the single currency for 10 years, but out for ever — Mr Portillo later offered lavish praise for the rival who snatched the leadership after he lost his Commons seat last year. But few MPs were deceived.

Intervening on Radio 4's Today with his old gusto, the ardently pro-European Mr Heseltine said: "I think William should be extremely concerned about what lies behind this Portillo agenda."

Mr Heseltine believes Mr Hague's Euro-scepticism has gone too far.

To his Daily Telegraph

article yesterday Mr Portillo indicated that it had not gone far enough to impress voters.

That leaves Tony Blair delighted at what the Prime Minister regards as the ineptitude of his opponents.

But Labour was also embroiled in a serious Euro-row last night. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was forced to return to the Commons for the second time to urge MPs to overturn a cross-party Lords amendment to the Euro-elections which would give voters more choice over the MEPs they elect, by replacing the so-called "closed list" system with an open list vote.

Mr Straw rejected reports that ministers would prefer to lose the bill altogether rather than compromise.

Since it introduces proportional representation (PR) for next June's Euro-elections, that would upset his Liberal Democrat allies who have loyally imposed a three-line whip in the Lords to help the government — even though they would themselves prefer an "open list".

Instead Mr Straw promised MPs — and peers — a review of the voting system after

next year's elections, hoping that will allow the Lords to back down rather than risk a "peers vs people" row over a Labour election manifesto pledge, just as the hereditary peers are about to be voted away.

In the Tory civil war Mr Portillo had called for a more sustained battle to save the pound. The Telegraph interpreted this as the most direct attack yet on Mr Hague by the former defence secretary, who lost his seat at the last election.

Mr Portillo, who remains the most popular choice for leader among the party right, poses no threat until he can return to the Commons.

Mr Heseltine said: "When Michael comes back there is going to be a concerted campaign, in which newspapers like the Telegraph will play a significant part, in order to replace Hague with Portillo."

Later, Mr Portillo issued a statement saying Mr Hague had shown "bold leadership" in particular on European issues.

He went on: "I am a strong supporter of all his policies, including those on Europe."

Apathy greets army recruiting blitz on Brixton

Burhan Wazir

HAD General Powell stepped out of his conference in central London yesterday, and travelled the couple of miles to Brixton, he would have seen the problems the army faces in recruiting from ethnic minorities.

Generations of black Britons watched with bemusement as the Household Cavalry held an impromptu recruitment drive near the south London town hall. A handful of people — some elderly, others barely in their teens — stood in silence as officers in full military dress paraded the nearby streets while others in combat gear mingled among passers-by, advocating life in the armed forces.

"It's the best life for everyone," said one. "You get plenty of perks, y'know. Imagine a kind of work where everyone is your friend. You get the chance to travel, go to different places and have lots of different experiences. I think it's the best option for everyone."

"Yeah, but you would say that," yelled a local teenager. "Maybe I would," replied the soldier, "but the reason we are out here in Brixton is to make ourselves more visible. Most people don't really know what the armed forces is about. They think that

we're this invisible force just out there somewhere. We're here to show people what we do and where we fit in."

In September, the Ministry of Defence announced a £1.5 million equal opportunity campaign to recruit more blacks, Asians and women into the forces. It was heralded as part of a drive "to lead by example", said the MoD. Only 1 per cent of around 200,000 armed forces personnel are black or Asian — and only 8 per cent are women.

In Brixton yesterday, the Household Cavalry promised more similar events around the country, including the rest of the country next year.

Part of the drive is to encourage a trust of the military and strip away the layers of an institution previously thought to exclude ethnic minorities.

But not all Brixtonians were enthusiastic. "It's just not the career for me, I've heard what they do to black people," said Michael Hart, aged 17. "I want to finish school and get a proper education. I just don't see the army fitting into what I want to do."

"You should listen to what these army men are saying," retorted Joyce Stuart, aged 56. "Some of our kids need discipline. If the army cleaned up its act and made itself more attractive to black people, we might not be so negative."

IRA women freed as impasse grows

John Mullan

Ireland Correspondent

TWO IRA women jailed for life for bombing offences in English seaside resorts were yesterday freed, bringing to 201 the number of terrorists released under the Good Friday Agreement.

Martina Anderson, aged 34, from Derry, and Ella O'Dwyer, from Tipperary, hugged as they left Maghaberry prison. They had served 14 years.

They appeared alongside Brighton bomber Patrick Magee in the dock at their trial and were convicted of planning an IRA bombing campaign in 1985. He received eight life sentences, but is expected to be freed next year.

Almost half of paramilitary prisoners have now been freed under the accelerated release programme which forms part of the agreement. All jailed terrorists are expected to be freed by July 2000 — and the Maze prison will close at the end of 2000. By then all of the 400 paramilitary prisoners eligible for release will have left and the H-blocks may be sold for housing or business.

● The Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Dublin yesterday, paving the way for an expected visit by the Queen to the Irish Republic.

● The Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Dublin yesterday, paving the way for an expected visit by the Queen to the Irish Republic.

to decommissioning. Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's nominee to the International Commission on Decommissioning, yesterday returned to the political fray with the most headline statement of Sinn Féin's position yet. He said there would be no IRA decommissioning, even as a gesture.

Mr McGuinness, out of action since breaking his leg in a charity football match last month, said: "Unfortunately, this issue is being used by Unionists as a blocking mechanism principally because they don't want Sinn Féin on the executive. They don't want a Fenian around the place."

Ken Maginnis, Ulster Unionist security spokesman, said: "There was no start date in the agreement for the release of prisoners, but now one half are out. It is time for Sinn Féin to begin to live up to its side of the bargain and its political and moral responsibilities. We face a very serious situation."

The Maze prison will close at the end of 2000. By then all of the 400 paramilitary prisoners eligible for release will have left and the H-blocks may be sold for housing or business.

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Jail officers protest banned

Alan Travis

Home Affairs Editor

PRISON officers were last night banned from launching a national campaign of industrial action today, in the first use of the courts by the present government against a trade union.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was granted a High Court injunction to prevent prison officers staging protest meetings over their 2.7 per cent pay offer outside the gates of the 135 prisons in England and Wales this morning.

He claimed that Labour was now using the Conservatives' Criminal Justice and Public

Order Act to ban legitimate union action. "Sabotage is not too strong a word to use," said Mr Healy. "We are appalled at the actions not only of the Prison Department, but also of the New Labour government using Tory anti-trade union laws which they are currently negotiating to repeal, to prevent us holding the meetings."

He added: "This has turned into a political matter."

But the Prison Service said the timing of the proposed meetings — between 7 am and 8.30 am — would mean they would be extremely disruptive.

The spokesman added that

facilities for holding the union meetings at less disruptive times had been offered.

The POA will hold a national delegates' meeting in London tomorrow, when it will discuss its reaction to the High Court injunction and also consider whether to recruit in Britain's growing number of private prisons.

● The Howard League for Penal Reform says in its annual report, published today, that the courts are still sending increasing numbers of women to prison.

There are 3,182 women in jail — more than double the number six years ago. The present prison population is 65,881.

The spokesman added that

Safety plea fails in mobile phone case

Magistrates reject claim that failure to issue health warning broke rules

Rory Carroll

ASCIENTIST yesterday lost a test case to force manufacturers and shops to put health warnings on mobile phones. Magistrates at Abergavenny, Swiltshire, dismissed charges that a mobile phone shop's refusal to carry notices had breached safety guidelines.

Roger Coghlin, a biologist from Footyool, said he was pleased he had brought the action against Mobile Communications Ltd, of

Cwmbran, because it highlighted the potential dangers. "When people develop brain tumours it will be cruel of me to say 'I told you so' but I think the industry will have a lot to answer for."

During yesterday's hearing, a government adviser admitted more research was needed to prove it was safe to use mobile phones and that increasing evidence suggested they had a biological effect.

Alistair McKinlay, of the National Radiological Protection Board, said guidelines would be tightened overnight

if scientific data showed mobile phones posed a health risk. That data does not yet exist but it remained a possibility.

Dr McKinlay denied the board was a "lapdog" for the mobile phone industry. Resolving the uncertainty over safety was an important challenge to scientists.

"It is an important problem and the NRPB faces it straight on," he said. "If there is scientific evidence tomorrow that our guidelines are not protecting the UK public as they should be, they would be revised."

The court heard that American guidelines for mobile phones suggested the level of electromagnetic waves was six times lower than guide-

lines issued by the NRPB.

On Monday, Alasdair Phillips, radiation expert, said he had been contacted by mobile phone users suffering headaches, loss of concentration, fatigue, skin tingling, eye tics, poor short-term memory, buzzing in the head, dementia and other side effects.

He said cancers caused by other environmental factors could take up to 20 years to appear. It has been repeatedly shown, he added, that a few minutes exposure to cell phone radiation could transform a 5 per cent active cancer into a 95 per cent active cancer for the duration of the exposure and for a short time afterwards.

Schoolgirl attacker's profile compared with two killings

Geoffrey Gibbs

POLICE hunting a knife-wielding schoolgirl to a terrifying attack yesterday alerted officers working on two unsolved West Country murders in case of possible links between the assaults.

The 15-year-old was attacked in woods close to her school in Torpoint, east Cornwall, yesterday morning. She suffered a cut to her hand.

Devoe and Cornwall police confirmed last night that officers investigating the year-old murder of the Exeter teenager Kate Bushell and the more recent killing of the Cornish housewife Lynda Bryant had been informed about the Torpoint incident.

The teenager, who is a pupil at Torpoint community college, was interviewed yesterday after she arrived at school in a distressed state.

Her attacker was described as white, between 30 and 40 years old and 6ft to 6ft 4in tall. He had prominent ears, dark brown hair and an untidy bushy beard.

Police said he was wearing a black sweatshirt, blue jeans

and red and white patterned trainers. The Torpoint attack comes almost exactly a year after the savage murder of Kate Bushell whose throat was slashed as she walked a neighbour's dog only a few hundred yards from her family home on the outskirts of Exeter.

Police have not established a firm link between the killings of Kate Bushell and Mrs Bryant, 41, but officers working on the investigations have been linking their computer data bases because of similarities in the two cases.

A reconstruction of Mrs Bryant's last known movements was being shown on the BBC's Crimewatch programme last night in a move investigators may help provide fresh leads in the hunt for the killer.

The girl left her home to walk to school at around 8.45 yesterday morning and was attacked from behind as she walked through an area known as Quarry Park Woods.

Police were called to the school by the headmaster after the girl arrived in what they said was a hysterical state.

Sarah Boseley on the radical nature of the Lords committee's recommendation that doctors should be able to prescribe cannabis

Out on a limb over beneficial joints

Scientific evidence that cannabis relieves the pain of multiple sclerosis sufferers and others does not exist. The House of Lords select committee on science and technology admits this in its report, published this morning.

That is why it is extraordinary that the committee, as an independent group made up mostly of scientists, wants doctors to be allowed to prescribe cannabis to patients.

The report is radical and represents a big departure from the position of the British Medical Association, which backed trials of cannabinoids — derivatives of the cannabis plant — last year but is firmly opposed to the use of cannabis itself, which

it says is full of toxins. But multiple sclerosis and cancer patients who smoke dope because it relieves the pain, and — in MS — reduces spasms, say that the cannabinoids in tablet form so far developed do not have anything like the swift and effective impact of the real thing, smoked in a joint.

The committee believes them, and feels it is wrong that those in pain should have to break the law and that their doctors should be under pressure to connive with them. The committee says that its recommendation is not scientific, but compassionate.

Medical use of cannabis was only made illegal in this country in 1973. Before that, as the peers point out, "it has

been used medically for thousands of years in oriental and Middle Eastern countries". Nobody has been killed by cannabis, which is generally accepted to be less toxic than alcohol.

The committee states that "the all the evidence we have received, there is not enough rigorous scientific evidence to prove conclusively that cannabis itself has, or indeed has not, medical value of any kind". Members had been convinced not by scientific proof, but by "anecdotal evidence".

They want cannabis to be made available legally to patients and quickly. That desire has put them in a difficult position. No standardised plant extract has yet been produced — as users know,

batch strengths on the street vary enormously — and no effective way of taking it other than smoking, which the peers do not want to endorse, has been developed.

They have taken the only logical route towards their goal. They have suggested, in effect, that doctors should write out a prescription for the patient to pick up his resin and his Rixlas at the local pharmacy.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society, which is about to start clinical trials, agrees with the committee — in fact, they say, they said it first.

The RPS would like to see doctors allowed to prescribe cannabis, but they point out that pharmacies would not be supplying the sort of cannabis that is smuggled in the soles

of people's shoes from Morocco or traded in cafes in Amsterdam.

If cannabis were moved from schedule 1, where it ranks as an illegal drug of abuse with no therapeutic use, to schedule 2, to become a controlled drug which can be prescribed under some circumstances, manufacturers would be able to produce and supply to chemists a standardised product.

Tony Moffat, the RPS's chief scientist, says the society believes the way ahead lies in cannabinoids — the active ingredients — rather than the whole plant, which he describes as "a pharmacologically dirty substance". When you ingest cannabis you take in hundreds of compounds, some of which may

do harm and some of which may be helpful. What we need to do is isolate the useful cannabinoids and that is why we need more research."

But the two-year clinical trials, to be launched in January, will examine both. Groups of volunteers, probably with MS, will take either the cannabinoid THC, which scientists think is responsible for the drug's pain-relieving effects, or an extract of the whole plant, or a placebo.

The results could be crucial. At the moment, most European countries take the line of the World Health Organisation that cannabis has no therapeutic value and is only a drug of abuse. Under a WHO convention, Europe agrees to ban its use by doctors. But if the RPS trials

prove there is therapeutic use, then the WHO line will probably change and the way will be open for medicinal use everywhere.

The peers think Britain should not wait. "We consider that the Government should not be afraid to give a lead in this matter in a responsible way," says the report. But they also urge that the clinical trials should get going as fast as possible.

While they suggest that smoking cannabis would be acceptable for the time being in patients who need immediate pain relief, they say that this is not satisfactory in the long run. They recommend research into other ways of taking it, such as inhalation, "which would retain the benefit of rapid absorption of

fered by smoking, without the adverse effects".

Unfortunately, cannabis taken orally is degraded by the liver before much of it can reach the brain, where it has its effects.

According to the UK Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics, the drug is probably used by several hundred people suffering from MS, although they may amount to no more than 1 per cent of those with the disease. Others who use it have spinal injuries, back pain, chronic arthritis, epilepsy and ME. The cannabinoids Nabiximol and Dronabinol are prescribed by some doctors for the nausea that follows chemotherapy for cancer. But ACT believes more people in this category smoke cannabis itself.



Bill Thornton-Smith: 'The danger of non-prescribed supplies is getting stoned from time to time' PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS EADES

'I'm absolutely delighted — I don't enjoy being a criminal'

David Ward

SUFFERERS who use cannabis to help control pain greeted the decision of the House of Lords committee with surprise and enthusiasm last night.

"I'm absolutely delighted," said Bill Thornton-Smith, a retired army officer who lives in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, and who began using the drug after he was diagnosed with

multiple sclerosis in 1989. "I don't particularly enjoy being a criminal. And I know some people who could benefit from the drug but won't touch it because it's illegal."

He regarded their lordships' recommendation as a vindication of those who had argued for the medical use of cannabis.

"I was getting fed up with people saying to the likes of me, 'You don't know what you are talking about,'" he



Joint action... 'legalise cannabis' campaigners flout the law to promote their case. But Britain's sick have to use it in secret to alleviate pain in their limbs PHOTOGRAPH: ROSIE HALLAM

said. "Cannabis is not a cure. I know that and everyone else knows that."

"If you have a headache, you can take a paracetamol. I've got MS and I would like to be able to use cannabis legally. I and other medical users are not just a bunch of people stoned out of their brains and sitting in wheelchairs. We've got a disease and this is a management tool."

Mr Thornton-Smith learned

through personal research about the effectiveness of cannabis in the control of muscle spasms. "There was a lot of evidence from all over the world and in the end I said that it was my bloody MS and I would see what I could do for myself."

He had never touched drugs before. Now he either smokes cannabis or drinks it, mixing it with water, lemon juice and a small amount of whiskey or brandy. It offers relief from

pain within about half an hour.

"I'll take about half a coffee mug a day — if I can get the cannabis. It's very difficult to get what I want. The sort of cannabis they had in the hippy era of the late sixties would have been absolutely perfect for medical use."

But the modern hybrid skunk-weed stuff is no good for medical use. It has to be pure, undiluted, no cross bred, fairly mild cannabis.

I don't use it to get stoned. I don't want to be out of it all the time. But the danger of using illegal, non-prescribed supplies is that you do get stoned from time to time. You don't actually know what you are getting until you try it out."

Mr Thornton-Smith has become involved with a marijuana co-operative set up two weeks ago to supply high quality cannabis to those who use it for the relief of pain.

Elizabeth Ivell, who has MS and lives on South Ronaldsay in Orkney, overcame her supply problems by growing her own cannabis.

"I got caught last year. Someone reported me and the police raided my house and took all my plants away. I was taken to court and admonished, so I now have a criminal record."

"My doctor told me about cannabis. I asked him where I could get it and he said 'Grow

it'. Cannabis completely gets rid of my pain and violent spasms."

"You are also supposed to avoid stress when you have MS and it just relaxes me. But I smoke or eat only a minuscule amount about once every five days."

"To tell you the truth, I don't think it will ever be legalised for medical use because the drug companies can't make any money out of it, can they?"

Britons warm to New World wines

Sarah Hall

THERE was a time when a glass of Liebfraumilch was considered a sign of sophistication but, nowadays, the discerning Briton is more likely to opt for a crisp chardonnay or a smooth cabernet sauvignon.

According to research published today, we are becoming increasingly adventurous in our choice of wine. The findings, by marketing analysts Mintel, also show the worldwide trend away from white

wine to red is being reflected in the UK, where sales have almost doubled since 1992 to reach 383 million litres this year.

In contrast, sales of white wine rose by a mere 5 per cent to 404 million litres, in the same period.

Drier wines and single-grape varieties are also finding increasing favour with our palates, while the German are losing their appeal. Sales of Australian and Californian wine, however, doubled between 1993-1997.

The research also reveals

that Britons buy 60 per cent more wine than six years ago, with £5.5 billion spent each year.

Some 73 per cent of the 1,900 consumers questioned bought wine, with just over 40 per cent buying two or more bottles a month.

But there are regional variations, with four out of five southerners buying wine, compared with only two thirds of Scots and Welsh. The variation is attributed, by Mintel, to the latter groups' buying more spirits.

Recent medical evidence,

revealing that modest consumption of red wine may prevent heart disease could also account for its surge in popularity, according to The Guardian's Food and Wine Editor, Matthew Fort.

He said: "The surge is not just due to good publicity but by the fact red wine is theoretically good for you."

A spokeswoman for the off-licence chain Oddbins added: "People are much more adventurous and much more excited about wine now because there's so much more on the market."

New caretaker for MPs' conduct

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

A WOMAN with a reputation for putting down obstreperous tax inspectors, is to become parliamentary commissioner for standards next February.

Elizabeth Filkin, aged 58, takes over from Sir Gordon Downey, who is retiring at the end of the month, aged 70.

In her present job as chief adjudicator investigating complaints against the Inland Revenue, and Customs and

Excise, she handled 677 complaints from the public.

In a report last year she accused tax inspectors of causing "uproar" through their rude treatment of the public.

Ms Filkin, who lives near London bridge, cycles to work. Her new four-day a week job pays £76,576 a year on a three-year contract, and involves keeping the parliamentary register, monitoring MPs' code of conduct, and looking into complaints against them — which have grown since Sir Gordon took

on the job in 1995 after the cash-for-questions scandal.

Ms Filkin trained as a social scientist and was a lecturer in social work. She became chief executive of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and of the Looe Docklands Development Corporation. She also chaired the legal aid inquiry set up by Lord Mackay, the former lord chancellor. Her non-executive directorships include the Britannia Building Society, Hay Management Consultants, and computer firm Logica.



Elizabeth Filkin: keeper of standards in parliament

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DELL

As Germany's chancellor calls for 'a federal order in Europe', Brussels formally opens the door to the six prospective new members

Schröder says Bonn is taking brakes off EU social policy

Ian Traynor in Bonn

CHANCELLOR Gerhard Schröder yesterday called for the European Union to be transformed into a federation and pledged to use Germany's EU presidency, starting in six weeks, to push for greater integration — including on the political front.

In a two-hour address to the newly elected Bundestag, Bonn's lower house, Mr Schröder set out his blueprint for the next four years of his coalition of Social Democrats and Greens — a blueprint that aims to make Berlin the capital of "a new republic of the new centre".

The European single currency, to be launched on January 1 as Germany takes over the rotating EU presidency, was but a stepping stone, he said, to "a political union... a modern Europe of the social market economy and environmental responsibility".

Mr Schröder said he would call a special EU summit early next year to hammer out a new financial dispensation in Brussels, entailing "fundamental changes" to the Common Agricultural Policy.

Europe-wide policies to fight unemployment were a priority, he added, reversing Helmut Kohl's opposition to French calls for an EU jobs pact.

"We will actively set the pace in reforming the EU," Mr Schröder said in the wide-ranging statement. "We'll ensure that Germany no longer acts to brake social policy in the EU."

The chancellor, aged 54,



Chancellor Gerhard Schröder tells parliament in Bonn yesterday that his new centre-left government will push for more political integration in Brussels. PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERTO PIRELLA

pointed out that the historic centre-left ascendancy across almost all EU states meant there was a new consensus of "social modernisers" in power across Europe.

The issue of a European federation has long been a highgear in Anglo-German relations, not least because the "F-word" is understood differently in Bonn and London. If the British equate "federal" with "centralised", Germans take the word to mean "decentralised".

Mr Schröder signalled that the Social Democrats are every bit as integrationist on Europe as Mr Kohl, Germany's previous chancellor.

"A federal order in Europe seems the best guarantee of peace, solidarity, and progress. The federal system in Germany has proven itself," Mr Schröder said. "We will only succeed in shaping a

common Europe that is closer to its people by developing further towards a political, a social, and an environmental union."

He stressed that relations with France remained the "foundation" of German European policy. He expanded on German relations with France, the United States and Poland, but made only one brief reference to Britain.

He said he wanted the tricky renegotiation of the Brussels budget concluded by the summit early next year, but said that he would push for a reduction in Germany's net contribution, though this would be hard to achieve.

"We're democrats and Europeans today, and because we have to be, because we want to be," he stressed, reflecting the arrival in power of a generation unscarred by the second world war, which marked the Kohl generation and shaped its European policies.

Most of the speech concentrated on Mr Schröder's main domestic challenges — cutting unemployment of around 4 million, launching reforms of the tax, welfare, and pension systems. The *Leipzig* of his first big speech since unseating Mr Kohl on September 27 were greater "social justice" and "modernisation".

"We're not for a rightwing or a leftwing economic policy, but for the modern policies of the social market economy," he said, seeking to banish arguments within his coalition between supporting supply-side economic policies led by his chief lieutenant and head of his chancellery, Rüdiger Dismund — and the push for policies to boost consumption and domestic demand spearheaded by his finance minister, Hans Eichel.

Next year's shift in the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin would signal the birth of a more open, more liberal and more cosmopolitan society, with Europe's largest immigrant population given the opportunity to enjoy full civil rights by becoming German citizens, he said.

"This is not just a move, it's a new departure. We want to make Berlin the capital of a republic of the new centre."



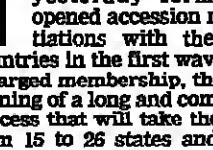
Poland
Population: 39 million
GDP per capita: \$23,900
For entry: Eastern Europe's star economic performer, with 7 per cent growth and an impressive record of meeting EU demands in industrial restructuring, in slashing jobs in coal and steel. Good marks on human rights and democracy, and already joining Nato.



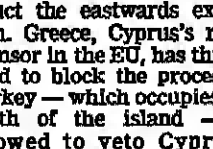
Czech Republic
Population: 10.5 million
GDP per capita: \$25,000
For entry: Everybody likes playboy president Vaclav Havel, and the Czechs have one of the most advanced industrial economies in Europe. Also joining Nato.



Slovakia
Population: 5.4 million
GDP per capita: \$25,375
For entry: So small and locked into the neighbouring Austrian and Italian economies, Slovakia's accession would hardly be noticed. As formerly part of Yugoslavia, its membership would help shore up the EU's notional support for Balkans.



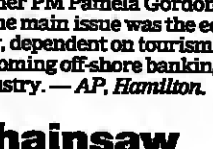
Hungary
Population: 10.5 million
GDP per capita: \$25,000
For entry: One of the stars. Sustained commitment to market reforms, low of foreign investment, steady growth. Joining Nato.



Estonia
Population: 1.3 million
GDP per capita: \$25,000
For entry: One of the stars. Sustained commitment to market reforms, low of foreign investment, steady growth. Joining Nato.



Latvia
Population: 2.6 million
GDP per capita: \$25,000
For entry: One of the stars. Sustained commitment to market reforms, low of foreign investment, steady growth. Joining Nato.



Lithuania
Population: 3.3 million
GDP per capita: \$25,000
For entry: One of the stars. Sustained commitment to market reforms, low of foreign investment, steady growth. Joining Nato.

Hard issues put off in expansion talks

Martin Walker in Brussels

THE EUROPEAN Union yesterday formally opened accession negotiations with the six countries in the first wave for enlarged membership, the beginning of a long and complex process that will take the EU from 15 to 26 states and advance its borders to the Black Sea.

After the formal approval of the EU's 15 foreign ministers, the representatives of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia, Cyprus and the Czech Republic had their 15-minute photo sessions with the ministers and the old cold war frontier crumbled some more.

But fears were expressed that the problem of the divided island of Cyprus could obstruct the eastward expansion. Greece, Cyprus's main sponsor in the EU, has threatened to block the process if Turkey — which occupies the north of the island — is allowed to veto Cyprus's admission.

Optimistic Poles and Hungarians say they expect to become full members by 2003, with long transition periods for tricky issues. Pessimistic Eurocrats (who shrink from setting firm dates) think more in terms of 2005 or later.

But now that the single currency is almost launched, the enlargement of the EU into central and eastern Europe takes centre stage as the project that will dominate the union's affairs for the next 20 years.

It will change both the EU's character — making it more on average considerably poorer — and its security priorities.

Among current EU citizens, per capita GDP is close to \$24,000 a year. By contrast, the 39 million Poles have a per capita GDP of barely a third of that, amount, and the 18 million Czechs and Hungarians have less than half. And these are the advanced candidates, far richer than the hapless Romanians and Bulgarians in the second wave, who are less than half

Europe finances its budget and the way it pays out its structural funds, designed to level out regional inequalities. It will also force a fundamental overhaul of the Common Agricultural Policy: the Poles alone have as many farmers as Britain, France and Germany combined.

The familiar Europe from the past 25 years of British membership has been an institution with its centre of gravity in the west of the continent, its capital in Brussels and its strategic direction resolutely Atlanticist. The new one will look more like the old German concept of Mitteleuropa, with its centre of gravity and its capital shifting towards Berlin and Frankfurt.

The tough negotiations will focus on the easy bits: harmonising rules on research and training, culture, and audiovisual and industrial policies. The newcomers will also have to be ready to sign up for the common foreign and security policy — though that has so far consisted of empty if well intentioned waffle.

The tough issues, such as farm policies, environmental standards and border controls, will come later. Austrian and German politicians and trade unions are worried about the effect of free movement of low-wage labour on jobs and pay. Czechs, Poles and Hungarians are even more worried about rich westerners buying cheap estates, particularly when some of them are Germans who lost those lands in 1945.

The admission of the poor easterners will have a dramatic impact on the way

the EU's character — making it more on average considerably poorer — and its security priorities.

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Diva power has Miller singing a chorus of disapproval

Martin Kettle

IN Washington, the story is as old as the history of opera itself. What the diva wants, the diva gets. And there isn't a lot that anyone can do to stop her, even a world-famous director like Jonathan Miller.

He is licking his wounds in Switzerland this week after the Italian opera superstar Cecilia Bartoli — possessor of the hottest, most marketable female voice on the international opera circuit today — overrode his objections and forced the management of the New York Metropolitan Opera to let her sing two rarely performed, replacement arias in a new production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, which Miller directs.

"I'm very disappointed," Miller confessed from Lausanne last night. "I left a very strong objection in New York which I put as unambiguously and as amicably as I could. But it was out of my hands. I just had to hoil with quiet resentment."

This is not the first time that the British director, whose production of *The Marriage of Figaro* has been enthusiastically received by American critics — has crossed cultural swords with the Met. In an interview earlier this year, he attacked its "Jurassic Park attitude" towards singers' financial and artistic demands. Miller is due to return to New York to direct Janacek's *Katya Kabanova* next month.

This latest example of prima donna power came when Bartoli arrived in New York to sing the role of the maid Susanna in Miller's all-star new production of Mozart's masterpiece of intrigue and reconciliation.

that she wished to sing the replacement arias composed by Mozart for a 1789 revival of the work.

Miller objected and refused to stage the alternatives versions, but Bartoli stood her ground. Mr Volpe and Levine, alarmed at the possibility of losing their number one attraction, gave in to the diva, sanctioning a compromise in which she sang Mozart's original and more familiar arias on the press night, but then sang the alternative numbers at later performances, including one tonight which is being recorded for video release next year.

"There is a certain amount of musicalological interest, and a large degree of novelty, in Ms Bartoli's decision," New York Times writer Anthony Tommasini wrote this week. "Artistically, it is hard to see the merits in using the later versions, and easy to understand Mr Miller's apparent dismay."

The two arias, one of which is a long and difficult vocal showcase, replaced arias which Miller — along with most of the rest of the oper-

atic world — sees as integral to the aesthetic and the plot of Mozart's opera.

The alternative arias replace Susanna's Act 2 'Veni, inquit, inquit' and her famous Act 4 'Deh, vieni!' and are normally only heard in recitals.



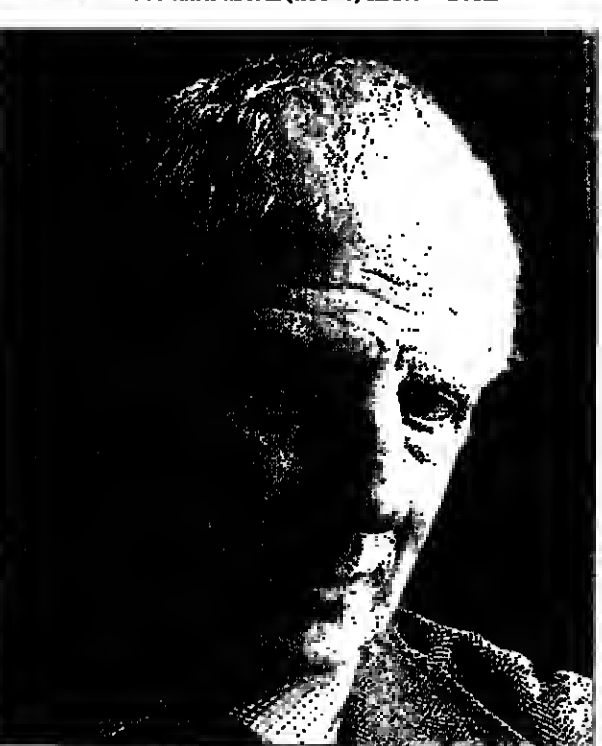
"The director is at the bottom of the ladder. It's the star who puts bums on seats," says Jonathan Miller (below) after a clash with Cecilia Bartoli (above) in New York

from the drama and the staging.

"But the truth is that the director is at the bottom of the ladder of influence in an argument like this. It's the star who puts the bums on the seats, so it's the star who gets her way. She thought these arias showed her off to advantage and she had the power to insist on it."

Miller insists that he enjoyed working with Bartoli, whom he praised as "absolutely punctual and cooperative". But he admitted: "She'll probably be angry with me because I've criticised her."

He said he felt sorry for the other principals, who included the Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel as Figaro and the American soprano Renée Fleming as Countess Almaviva. "They were unbelievably understanding," he said.



Ironically, Miller is now in Lausanne to direct Richard Strauss's opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which the central character is a temperamental prima donna. "I'm having an enchanting time," he said.

Caroline Hurford, the LCRC's spokeswoman in Moscow, said the much-vaunted economic stabilisation of late 1997 and early 1998 had done nothing to prevent millions sliding deeper into poverty.

News in brief

Labour wins in Bermuda

BERMUDA'S Labour Party swept to victory in a general election on Monday, ending the conservatives' 30-year rule. Preliminary results gave 26 of the 40 parliamentary seats to Labour and the rest to the United Bermuda Party of former PM Pamela Gordon.

The main issue was the economy, dependent on tourism and a booming off-shore banking industry. — AP, Hamilton.

Chainsaw killings

RIGHT wing Colombian militants with chainsaws

killed 11 peasants and kidnapped 13 others, accusing them of collaborating with leftist guerrillas, police said.

A group calling itself R-20 carried out the killings on Monday in two hamlets about 155 miles north of Bogotá.

One victim was a woman who was reported to have been killed in place of her absent husband. — AP, Bogotá

Army's thugs incite riots

GANGS of Muslim militants, meant to be helping the Indonesian military keep order as parliament met in Jakarta, provoked clashes with government opponents yesterday. MPs were debating a less authoritarian system, includ-

ing limiting the presidential term to two five-year periods and allowing unlimited political parties. — Reuters, Jakarta.

Paris protest by officers

ADOZEN former French officers staged an unprecedented demonstration outside the armed forces headquarters in Paris yesterday to demand the release of an officer suspected of spying for Yugoslavia.

The [French] army with the Serbs — Free Major Buel, said one banner. Maj Pierre Buel was accused last month of giving Belgrade secret Nato plans for air strikes in the crisis over Serb repression in Kosovo. — Reuters, Paris.

Allies battle for Gulf weapon sales deal

RICHARD MORTON-TAYLOR

al-Sabah, told MPs the decision to buy the Paladins was a sound one.

However, the Ministry of Defence in London said yesterday that Kuwait had made no official announcement. Britain's GEC-Marconi is trying to sell the Desert AS90 howitzer.

George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said on Monday that Kuwaiti leaders had told him the deal was still open.

"We were assured by the Crown Prince that the decision has not been finally taken," Mr Robertson said, referring to Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, who is also Kuwait's prime minister.

Other guns being offered are the G-6 made by Denel of South Africa, and the Chinese PL-26.

The Arab Times reported that MP Mubarak al-Duwailah told supporters last week: "I am confident the Pala-

UN sounds food alarm over Russian winter

James Meek in Moscow

ISOLATED regions of Russia could run out of food this winter, a United Nations agency warned yesterday as efforts to push surplus Western farm produce Moscow's way gathered pace.

The Rome-based United Nations Food and Agriculture Agency said areas of the far north and north-east, which are partly cut off from the rest of the country as seas and rivers freeze, faced a risk of "eratic food supplies".

It linked the crisis to the country's disastrous harvest, which has been known of for months. Most Russia-based

experts, however, argue that the country is not short of food, but simply lacks cash in circulation, and a banking system capable of buying and moving food to where it is needed.

This summer was one of the harshest the grain belt has known. In wheat fields from the northern Caucasus to central Siberia, farmers watched in despair as crops shrivelled in the heat.

But Andrei Sizov, an analyst with the Russian agricultural consultancy Sovcon, said that despite the appalling harvest, Russian farmers had exported a record 120,000 tonnes of grain in September. The real problem, he said, was the banking

crisis, which froze the accounts of big Russian grain buyers just when they were about to conclude deals with the farmers.

The government is accepting more than 3 million tonnes of emergency food aid from the United States, and considering an offer of almost 2 million tons of grain and meat from the European Union, not because Russia is desperately short of home-grown food, but because the government is short of cash — and food, rather than money, is all the West is prepared to give.

The International Monetary Fund suspended payments of a long-term \$2.6 billion (£13.5 billion) loan after the August 17 financial collapse in Russia.

"Obviously we can't give money, we're giving food," said Bertrand Soret, spokesman for the European Commission office in Moscow.

"We want to retain some kind of control over the use of this assistance, and if you give money it's harder to control."

Mr Sizov said the food priorities for the government were not so much the population at large as its two most miserable institutions — its conscript army and overcrowded prison system, both utterly dependent on Moscow for food. Russia's jails hold more than a million people.

"It's necessary to feed the army and the prisons. That's the reality. That's where the bread will go," he said.

But other groups are desperately short of money to buy food and do not have the means to grow their own.

The International Red Cross points out that these groups were the main victims of the free market and the barter economy, long before the financial crisis and the bad harvest.

Caroline Hurford, the LCRC's spokeswoman in Moscow, said the much-vaunted economic stabilisation of late 1997 and early 1998 had done nothing to prevent millions sliding deeper into poverty.

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Such disillusion is catching. Last week, a West Bengal party shoring up the BJP-led coalition deserted the co-ordinating council because of the price rises.



France, Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Canada and a dozen other countries have sent official aid and up to 30 charities are now registered with the Honduran government, including animal welfare groups. A British plane-load of health kits and blankets is being divided up and will be distributed this week by the Honduran Red Cross.

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The Observer, 09.08.98

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The value of investments and the income from them may fall as well as rise and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. The tax treatment of PEPs will change in April 1999. *Source: The Observer 09.08.98. £1,000 invested to 31.07.98 over one year, offer to bid price, net income re-invested. 16 funds were surveyed. The value of £1,000 invested at launch on 01.11.96 to 31.07.98 was £1,538.00, offer to bid price, net income re-invested. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. For your protection your calls to Scottish Widows may be recorded or monitored. Issued by Scottish Widows Investment Management Limited. Regulated by the Financial Services Authority and FIPIC.

Diary

Matthew
Norman

THE Diary has considered the News of the World's justification for outing Nick Brown — namely, that the public has an inalienable right to know all about the powerful — and finds itself utterly convinced. So we glance at the Observer's list of Britain's 300 most powerful, where we find that, although Nick Brown is absent, News of the World editor Phil Hall appears at 205. Obviously Mr Hall wants us to know all about him. However, he himself is enchantingly bashful (the last time we called, after he'd been hoaxed about a phantasmal "IRA terrorist", he failed to return calls). So others — old girlfriends or boy-friends, present and former colleagues, friends and even family members — will wish to help him out by calling our Phil Hall Hotline (0171 713 4370) or writing in, appending photographs and other relevant documents where possible. We will then put any allegations to Mr Hall in the manner he would prefer... on his doorstep, in the light of early morning.

In a rare piece of good news for the corporation, viewing figures for BBC World have improved dramatically in Brussels. British MEPs have been tuning in to it remorselessly in the past week, partly perhaps because it has been mysteriously replaced by a porn channel on which a naked woman parades for ten minutes, giving her name and phone number, before making way for another. Audience share will return to normal later today, however, when engineers at the parliament building restore the correct frequency.

An intriguing historical document reaches the Diary. It is the manifesto of Sun editor David Yelland (below) when seeking reelection as Lancaster Poly's communications officer in 1982. "So," says David when we call him on the matter, "you're going to destroy my career then?" Only a little. After all, you powerful public figures must be accountable. He laughs, weakly. "Well, please point out I was 18 when I wrote that," in the document, David declared himself SDP and promised to vote for Shirley Williams as leader ("mind you, the year before, I was much more left wing; but I fell out with Broad Left"). He also proposed the student mag's editor should be elected — a notion, he tells us, since abandoned — and described revamping the Newsletter as "a very difficult thing to do". An enemy of monetarism and supporter of Manchester City, his hobbies ranged from drinking to excess to jangling his office keys in public. Oh yes, and he had "a cat called Tiger who is

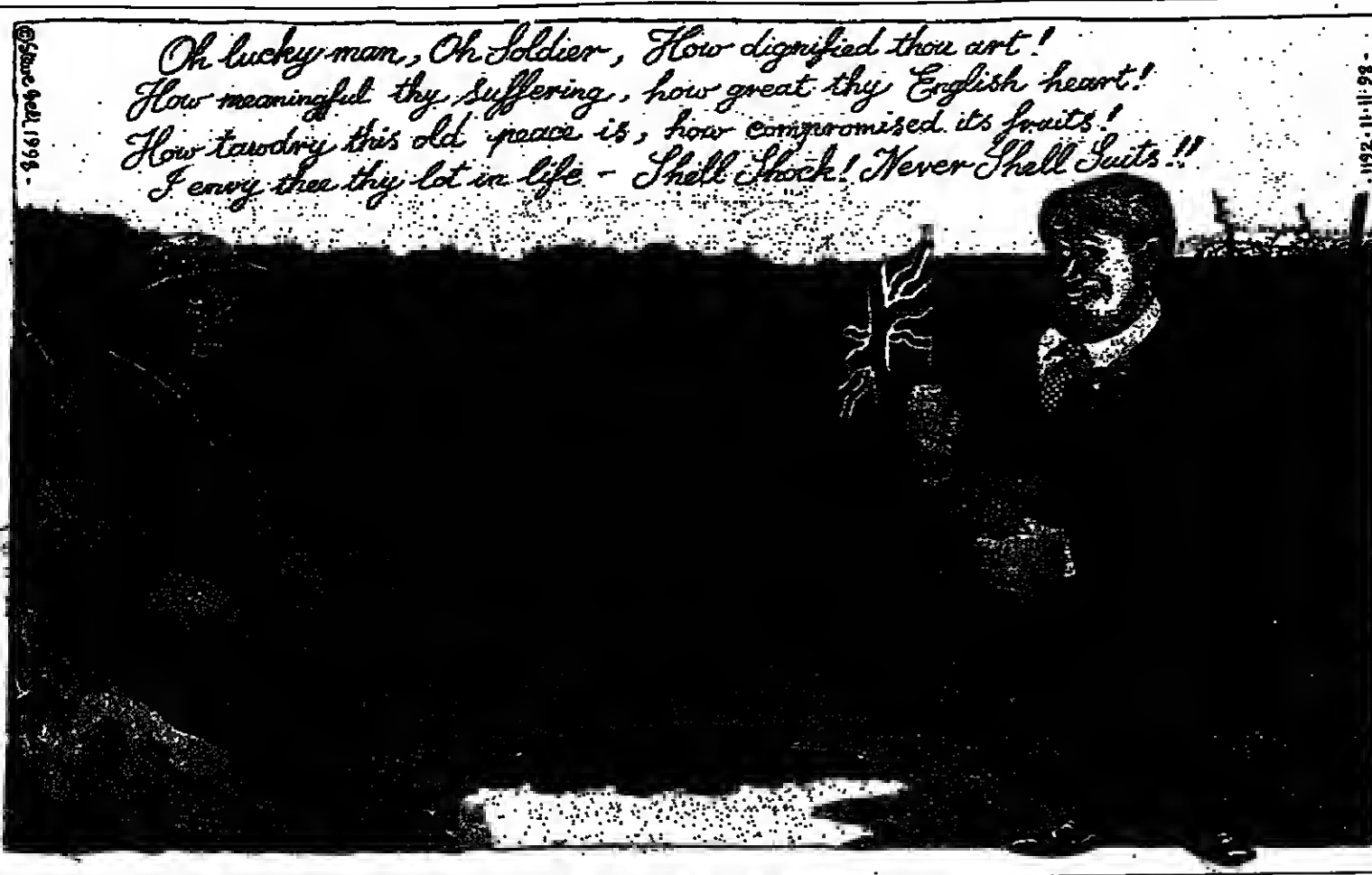


Yelland as student

mad". David was re-elected, and served three terms.

OVER at the Mirror, Paul Runtledge praises Nick Brown, twice, saying he showed "courage" in coming out. Runtledge, you'll have to do better than that to get back in Nick's good books, having cost him his job as chief whip. Last year, when in hot water over his fiercely independent Gordon Brown biography, Paul took space in the Scotsman to unveil Nick as main source for the material on the leadership struggle. The poorest of shows.

BUT how busy Paul is. Last week he went on ITV's televised shouting match Thursday Night Live. When boulevardier Andrew Neil asked him if Mandy is the Prince of Darkness, he replied: "Some may say he is the Prince of Darkness." Comic genius, certainly, although how it ties in with the Mirror's attack on the Sun's "homophobia" is unclear. Watch yourself, Runtledge. You are asking for a slap.



Blair should let the party choose its would-be mayors. They might win

Jonathan
Freedland

TWO of Labour's deepest instincts are at war. One is the commitment to spread power around, the other the urge to keep every last shred of it to itself. The good angel knows it should devolve power, the bad, control-freak angel can't let go. In human form, the battle pits Ken Livingstone and Rhodri Morgan against Tony Blair and his chums. At issue is a simple question: now that Blair has entrusted local communities and nations with power, will he let them pick their own leaders?

The latest round was fought just last night, when the governing body of London's Labour party gathered to decide how to pick its candidate for the new job of mayor. If it was up to the activists, Livingstone would almost certainly be the winner. But last night, the 23-member ruling board was asked to approve a new selection procedure, one with a vetting panel likely to reject Citizen Ken as a dangerous rebel.

In Wales a similar struggle is in full blood, with Downing Street insisting that its man, Alun Michael, take over as the new party leader — with a view to becoming the first "prime minister of Wales".

But the footsoldiers want their own favourite, backbencher Rhodri Morgan, to get the job. Both fights involve a contradiction. The new jobs, whether mayor or first minister, have only come about thanks to Labour's ground-breaking policy of devolution. The logic of the policy is that power should no longer be concentrated in Whitehall, but spread to where people live. Yet, now that it comes to picking the people to implement

that principle, the principle itself is trampled on. Suddenly Wales and London cannot be trusted with their own politics. Suddenly the gentleman in Millbank knows best.

For Tony Blair, the contradiction is even more blatant. One of the signature boasts of the Blairite project is the enshrining of the principle of one member, one vote. That's the very system both Rhodri and Ken wish to fight under — chiefly because they reckon they'd win. Yet Millbank refuses to allow it. In Wales it wants a highly-fixable electoral college. In London it's happy to let the members decide — but only after it's weeded out any "unsuitable" candidates.

New Labour is not just making an error of principle here. It's also committing bad politics. Stitching up Rhodri Morgan will anger the already-restless loyalists of Welsh Labour. Devolution was never a done deal in Wales, and motivation levels will sink low next May if activists are forced to knock on doors for a leader they did not choose.

But the risk in London is greater. Even if Alun Michael is imposed, Labour is bound to win in Wales. If Labour picks the wrong candidate in London, it could lose. And here's where the control-freaks look ridiculous. The poll numbers for Ken Livingstone are through the roof. A BBC survey in May found the former GLC leader not only outgunning all his Labour rivals, but also beating the likes of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. The Liberal Democrat Simon Hughes. Red Ken even has the edge over the fantasy candidate, Richard Branson. As if to ram home the point, a Lon-

don Evening Standard poll discovered that 75 per cent of all Londoners think it would be wrong if Livingstone was blocked.

In other words, Labour has a potential winner in Ken Livingstone — but doesn't want him to compete. Like Glenn Hoddle keeping Michael Owen off the field, this is not discipline — it is self-defeat.

The official line is that Ken's numbers are inflated, boosted by name recognition: he's the only candidate Londoners have heard of. Trouble is, Jeffrey Archer and Glenda Jackson are hardly obscure nobodies, and they don't rate anywhere near Livingstone.

OTHERS insist that a selection panel is not some new, Stalinist device: on the contrary, even the young Ken Livingstone would have had to win the approval of a committee before becoming a candidate for the old GLC. But this is disingenuous: the fact that Livingstone has been a member of parliament for 10 years surely proves he is fit to be a Labour candidate. If it does not, then what is Labour saying about its MPs? Surely the backing of 10 local Labour parties — the original requirement for a place on the ballot — counts as sufficient proof of "suitability". If an individual has that much support, how can they not be a potential candidate? And if they are not, what is Labour saying about the judgment of its own members?

Livingstone's biggest problem is his record of perceived disloyalty, culminating in his recent call for Gordon Brown to be sacked as Chancellor. "The bloke's a joke," says one inner source. This gets us

close to the heart of the matter. For it shows how Labour has failed to understand the logic of devolution. It still believes the usual rules of party discipline apply, still assumes the old hierarchies of obedience can remain in place, even as the system itself is transformed.

So it imagines Wales can run its own affairs, but that its leader will be handpicked by Tony Blair, remaining utterly on-message. It pictures a mayor of London as loyal to Number 10 as a junior minister. But that is not how diffused power could ever work.

Think of the one place where big city mayors already exist, and where regions have their own, muscled authorities. As the mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani is pitted to clash with Bill Clinton and Washington, DC, his chief task is to get the best deal for his city.

Such a set-up should not frighten New Labour. On the contrary, it represents a great opportunity. For when a Democratic mayor or governor blunders, no reporters hassle President Clinton. They do not claim a "Democratic split" or demand the president step in. For Americans understand that when power is separated, the party leader cannot be blamed for everything. As Clinton himself has shown over the years, such a leader can even watch as his party suffers bad election losses — while his own standing remains undimmed.

So Tony Blair should let Wales and London pick whoever they like. If he gets involved, he gets blamed. If he stays out, he can let them make their own decisions — and their own mistakes.

Who's in charge here? The newspapers or the politicians?

Curb the red-tops

Polly
Toynbee

THE spectacle of a man being bullied by a gang of thugs is disgusting enough — but it gets much worse when the victim bends down and kisses the boots that kicked him, vainly hoping to appease. Thus Nick Brown announces that he won't be complaining about his treatment to the Press Complaints Commission, and thanks people for their kindness.

Worse still, the Government steps in and does the same. The Sun quoted Downing Street saying: "There is no need for a privacy law. Self-regulation works." "Lick, lick and no doubt soon it will be lick, lick again."

"Well," says the same Downing Street spokesman, "we did say the PM believes self-regulation is best. But we don't see the point of giving the Sun yet more publicity by attacking them." Novel gazing journeymen may be obsessed, but the Prime Minister has more important issues than the state of the press — like Saddam and welfare reform. Their own polling shows the public are "sick to death" of the press and barely believe a word in the tabloids — so who cares?

But are we really to believe this Government doesn't give a damn about the press? Or is that just bold talk, covering their natural fear of the press bullies? Tony Blair at the party conference challenged the press not to use his family campaign "as an excuse to dredge through the private lives of every public figure". So why doesn't he take some action when one of his ministers is outed for doing nothing illegal?

Nick Brown's privacy was monstrously invaded: his sick mother didn't know he was gay, though many of his friends did. If a public figure fears making a fuss, that's understandable if regrettable, but when the whole Government machine is also too frightened to do anything it becomes a constitutional issue. Who's in charge here? The Murdoch and Rothmans bullies or the elected politicians?

MAYBE they're just a bunch of boobies kicking about for a bit of newspaper-selling fun. But fear of secret files on the lives of ministers are a powerful weapon for controlling Governments. The Major government suffered frequent

rumours of senior ministers on the point of exposure by Murdoch papers. Even if such rumours are false, they help an overmighty press baron with his own political and business agenda to lean hard on governments. Successful intimidation has protected the press from any media legislation it doesn't like. No privacy law, no competition law specifically for the press, no media ownership regulation: we are the only Western country that allows one man to own 41 per cent of all newspaper readership, and a large slice of television as well. John Major considered privacy legislation but took fright, with the pathetic warning that the press was drinking in the "last chance saloon": it's been open-all-hours ever since.

Instead we have "self-regulation". The Press Complaints Commission's code of practice is a fine document — breached every day of the week. It makes entertaining reading, starting with the noble principle that newspapers shall not publish "inaccurate, misleading or distorted material". Students set the task of cutting out everything that breaches the code were left with more holes than paper. Article 3 reads: "Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence." Everyone, that is, except whoever the press feels like outing today. There is no need to de-

bate whose privacy might rightly be invaded since the press has already signed up to this code that says everyone has a right to their private lives, so long as they're doing nothing illegal.

The PCC only responds to victims who complain on their own behalf, (except in rare victimless cases, as when a paper is accused of paying a criminal). They reject third-party complaints. Like Nick Brown, the famous tend not to complain because it only prolongs the publicity. Many ordinary people don't complain because they don't know about it in their unexpected hour of need. The PCC, with Lord Wakeham its chairman, is paid for and appointed by the press itself, with seven of its 16 members drawn from the newspaper industry. Not surprisingly, its impact is negligible. Wakeham says he thinks our press good. Many others think our press one of the nastiest in the world, fount of a crude cultural barbarity that astonishes foreign observers. Do we get the press we deserve? Is it a true reflection of ourselves, or does it shape us in its own horrible image? Tabloid editors say they only give people what they want — no one's forced to buy them. True. But people buy them to see what they're up to, even while they disapprove. Seventy-three per cent want tougher privacy laws.

Human rights laws enacted this week include an article guaranteeing privacy. We wait with trepidation to see how the judges will interpret this, creating case law haphazardly as they go. How much better it would have been to have a privacy law openly drawn up and publicly debated in the Commons. However, if the Government dare not do that, they



A public showdown with the bullies would earn Blair great respect

could make the PCC effective. If it had teeth and independence, the PCC has the great advantage of being free to users, while courts offer redress only to the rich few.

A new PCC would still be funded by a levy on the press, but otherwise it would be entirely independent. It would become pro-active, studying the papers each day ready to call in every article that breaches the code — no more waiting about for complaints. It should be able to order very large, heavy print apologies on front pages. Given the lack of control over the press and its ownership, this is a very modest proposal — but it might make a difference, before trying bigger sticks.

A public showdown with the bullies would earn Blair great respect. And he might find they were only paper tigers after all. As he inches towards the euro, he will have to face down the largely xenophobic press anyway. If he can win in the face of their feghorn opposition, then he never need fear them again. Maybe he would then dare introduce media ownership laws too.

Now the whole constitution is being overhauled — FR, a new House of Lords, devolution and city mayors — there will be much debate on delicate balances of power. Is there nothing to be said at all about the unfettered might of the fourth estate — as if it didn't exist?

Amnesty may be able to confirm reports of human rights violations using new satellites

Spy snaps for sale

Duncan Campbell

AN ASTONISHINGLY high-powered spy satellite is due to be launched from Vandenberg US Air Force base in California next month — but it's commercial, not military.

A mark of the frightening accuracy of the Ikonos-1 is that it is to be specifically prohibited by US law from operating over Israel. This is thanks to the customary effectiveness of the Israeli lobby in the US Congress. The Ikonos-1 marks a new conflict in space between the US and Russia. But the battleground now is not strategic dominance — it's the big bucks that commercial corporations hope to make by selling new and immensely detailed pictures of the earth's surface.

By mid-1999, anyone who wants an up-to-date spy sat image of anywhere on the planet can have it within less than a week, weather permitting. Showing fea-

tures down to a metre in size, these images will map military and refugee movements or chart natural disasters in startling detail. Vehicles and tanks and buildings of all kinds can be identified, measured and counted.

In 1944, the RAF and USAF photographed Auschwitz, but said nothing at the time. In the 1960s, the CIA photographed the prison labour camps of the Soviet gulags — but kept this hard (and convincing) evidence of inhumanity in top secret intelligence files. Now, organisations like Amnesty International or Greenpeace may be able to confirm and prove reports of environmental disasters or human rights violations using the new privatised spy satellites.

Aerial reconnaissance images have already been used sporadically in the news media. Mass graves in Bosnia were highlighted three years ago when US photographs of an area near Donje Pilica showed bodies

strewn across the ground while a bulldozer dug disposal pits. Pictures like these have encouraged enthusiasts to preach the dawn of a new era in international reporting. "They permit new types of articles. They provide access to zones which are closed and an

Images will be sold of anywhere on the planet, down to one metre in size

ability to analyse what is taking place." Professor Chris Simpson of the American University told an international meeting of investigative journalists in Boston last weekend.

Simpson and his team are now training journalists and human rights teams how to use satellite imagery. Their projects include scorched-earth warfare in

Bosnia and Africa, refugee relief in Kosovo, deforestation and logging operations in Latin America, and mining pollution in the Philippines.

This marks a remarkable transition from the first decade of the cold war, when President Eisenhower proclaimed "open skies". That meant in practice that the US had planted Old Glory in near-space orbit. Secret US photographic satellites were soon to operate to national advantage and with complete impunity. Ten years after the end of the cold war, the tables have been turned. The end of the superpower confrontation and the drive for global markets has launched the new, financially driven, conflict in space. Just as in the 50s, Russia got there first. It's now six years since companies in the former Soviet Union started selling pictures from some of the best of their photographic spy satellites. Able to see details down to a size of 2

metres, these Russian birds forced the US government to abandon its longstanding policy of prohibiting commercially available images sharper than 10 metres. Towns and roads could be plotted on such fuzzy pictures, but little else.

The US Department of Commerce is now licensing US companies to orbit satellites and sell pictures at one metre — 10 times sharper. Ikonos-1 is the first of four such high-resolution satellites planned for launch by the end of 1999.

You will be able to get a print of your back garden for as little as \$50, although if you want a satellite to pay a special visit to a target, don't expect to have much change left out of \$5,000. These prices are bargain basement compared to what the CIA and GRU paid a decade earlier.

Duncan Campbell (who is not the Guardian's crime correspondent of the same name) is an expert on electronic intelligence

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The Guardian
Wednesday November 11 1998
Edition Number 47332
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Tel No: 0171-278 2332
Fax No: 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

Crisis in Iraq — again

Try a new way out

WHILE the world's back was turned, watching the American election's surprise boost for Bill Clinton and Hurricane Mitch's catastrophic onslaught on Central America, a crisis of potentially immense proportions has been slinking up the path. For a few days it went almost unremarked by the media. But now, as the diplomatic briefers speculate about Washington's response, the magnitude of what is looming becomes clearer. Saddam Hussein, Iraq's president, announced a week ago that he had lost patience with the United Nations special commission (Unscow) which is monitoring the dismantling of his weapons programmes and would refuse to co-operate any longer. As a first reaction, the American and British defence secretaries rushed to the Gulf to consult with Arab governments. There they made the usual noises about the villainy of the Iraqi dictator, the intolerance of his behaviour and the robustness of their determination not to let him get away with it. Mr Clinton called his advisers to Camp David.

The inspired leaks from these deliberations claim this is the most serious Iraqi-inspired confrontation since the Gulf war. They imply the United States is closer to using force against Saddam than at any time since 1991. They suggest cruise missiles would be launched at Iraqi military systems and weapons development sites. It sounds dramatic, yet as one looks at the small print a different scenario hovers into view. It runs almost directly counter to the

imminent use of force. Under this second interpretation of what is being prepared, the United States should propose the abandonment of Unscow and the withdrawal of the weapons inspectors. By keeping them in Iraq, the United Nations merely gives Saddam a lever which he can pull whenever he wants a crisis, as he has done twice this year already. The Iraqi dictator, it is argued, thrives on crises since they tend to raise his profile as well as giving a spurious justification to his hard-line policies.

With Unscow withdrawn and thereby having given up the effort to eliminate Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, the outside world — according to this second version of the approaching American decision — should seek to contain him. Sanctions would remain in place, and under the rubric of "containment" rather than "disarmament" force would only be used if Iraq violated its neighbours' sovereignty or launched acts of egregious repression on its own citizens, as it did when it used gas against Iraqi Kurds.

Whichever version of the American leaks is true, they appear to indicate that a debate is going on between the hawks and doves. The doves have the better case. The hawks have had the upper hand for the last seven years with little to show for it. To go over the top and use force unilaterally would split the United Nations Security Council, give Saddam unnecessary kudos, and exact an unpredictable cost in civilian casualties. Most of all, it would have no guarantee of success, whether that means the destruction of Iraq's weapons potential or the overthrow of Saddam.

The alternative policy, though its opponents will call it a retreat, offers fewer hostages to fortune. Once the West decided after liberating Kuwait not to move up to Baghdad and topple the Iraqi leader, it was

always going to be hard to control his internal policies. Sanctions are a blunt instrument which Saddam turned to his own use as a propaganda weapon. By accepting there is little that can be done except keep Saddam's aggressive instincts under some restraint and within Iraq's borders the outside world is doing the best there is. What came up the path the other day may not have been the mother of all crises, but the glimmerings of a better Western policy.

Pot practice

Let GPs prescribe the weed

WHO says scientists should not use common sense? The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology caused a considerable kerfuffle in scientific circles yesterday. They concluded in their latest report that there is insufficient scientific evidence to prove the medical value of cannabis but even so recommended that the Government should reclassify the drug to allow doctors to prescribe it as an unlicensed medicine on a named-patient basis. This was not a collection of hereditary nobodies but a notable panel heavily weighted with distinguished medical scientists (a biologist, chemist, physicist, medical researcher, neurologist, pathologist and practising fertility specialist) advised by Oxford University's visiting professor of pharmacology. In an unequivocal conclusion they declare: "We have received enough anecdotal evidence to convince us that cannabis almost certainly does have genuine medical applications, especially in treating the painful muscular spasms and other symptoms of MS and in the control of other forms of pain."

The British Medical Association was not amused. It criticised the Lords for failing to

distinguish between the active constituents of cannabis and cannabis itself. It noted cannabis had many toxic ingredients and 60-plus cannabinoids. It believed there should be no change to its legal position until further research had established which cannabinoids had therapeutic value so that new cannabis-based drugs could be developed. It opposed the use of crude cannabis because of the "unpredictable nature of its effects". But "unpredictable" is the wrong word. Although there is only one small clinical trial on the medical benefits of cannabis there is a mountain of evidence from MS sufferers that cannabis does ease their pain. The reason why cannabis has these effects may be "unknown" but the effects are not "unpredictable". This was one of the reasons why the Lords came out in support of using the drug. Even the medic about to conduct the clinical trials into cannabis, who spoke out against the report yesterday, conceded the anecdotal evidence was impressive.

The Lords should be congratulated for listening to patients rather than researchers. Cannabis was used medicinally for centuries before being overtaken by more powerful drugs but it still provides relief for a small category of ailments where modern drugs have little effect. Knowing why it works would be helpful but making it illegal until we know why is wrong.

In memoriam

Silence, if you please

... AGE SHALL not weary them, nor the years condemn. What's been striking, on this 80th anniversary of Armistice Day 1918, is how the leaves of collective memory of the Great War become greener with the passing

years. The edge of controversy — over the qualities of British military leadership, the causes of the war, the shortcomings of military justice — cuts sharper than ever. There seems to be a new assertiveness about recollection, though the impression may owe something to the BBC's rigorous enforcement of the presenters' poppy rule (which in turn might have to do with the Corporation's growing uncertainty about its place in the nation). Other conflicts, the Second World War too, lose focus; even the inevitable glorification of military derring-do which goes with these November days has this year been swallowed in the attention paid to the human costs of the First War.

No general case can be made for remembering the past, especially as peace struggles to endure in Northern Ireland and black and white South Africans creakingly come to terms. There's a risk, too, in throwing contemporary ideas of justice and proper procedure back into situations where they had no purchase. (The case for re-examining First World War convictions for cowardice and desertion is that they were unsafe at the time, either because they were based on a false doctrine of exemplary punishment or because they simply did not take all the evidence into account.) But there is something valuable in the way remembrance joins us with our forbears and requires us to stretch our imaginations to encompass their lives, and deaths. Heavy injunctions about observing moments of silence are unnecessary and counter-productive. Compulsory memory, like rote learning, tends to be short-run and empty. The significance of 11am this morning is only this. We take peace (in this part of this hemisphere) for granted. An occasional moment of reflection on its blessings and its fragility has to be worthwhile.

Letters to the Editor

More shelf life needed for IT

AN extra £1 billion is to be given to schools to develop learning through computers (Report, November 7). Our school has just become a technology college but we still only have one 75-minute lesson of IT in two weeks. Computers are the future, what is the point of spending all this money when we don't have the time to benefit from it? Anna White (aged 14), Cockfield, Co Durham.

AN appropriate convention for the next decade (Letters, November 9) is to be found in the film *Stranger Days*, in which Ralph Fiennes and co celebrate the advent of 2K. This suggests a sequence 2K1, 2K2... which strikes me as more funky than "Twenty oh-one" etc. Matthew Wilson, Reading, Berkshire.

WILL the millennium release of Microsoft Windows come to be known as "Windows Uh-oh"? David Purdy, Derby.

RE Mr Lewis's question (Letters, November 10): I have taken your remarks on board and think that at this point in time, having no hidden agenda, we should put a considered response on the back burner, ruling nothing out or indeed in, until appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure that any loose cannon can be quietly sidelined to avoid rocking the boat, so that we can then run the whole issue up the flagpole to see who salutes, before drawing a line underneath it and moving forward. Dave Hall, Macclesfield.

IT'S all selfless stuff which will reach the end of its shelf life soon. Jane Knott, Brussels.

Why we can't forget

ROBIN Summer asked why we can't let go of the Great War (Weekend, November 7). The answer lies not only in his own statistics of how many hundreds of thousands of people still have first hand memories, but in those even larger numbers of our parents' generation, whose fathers fought in the conflict and came home forever changed by their experience. My grandfather came back, minus part of his face, to raise five children through the Depression.

I knew him until he died for the second time in 1964, after previously becoming one of "the Glorious Dead" leading a trench raid in 1917 (I still have the card sent to my grand-mother by the War Office). So the war reaches out to touch not only my mother, but me too. Without the skills of the Imperial German Army Medical Corps, neither of us would have existed.

David Comerford, West Drayton, Middx.

IN commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Armistice, one consequence of the Great War risks being forgotten: an irreversible loss of the public's trust in newspaper journalists. War reporters were fed official propaganda on a scale never seen before, stories censored, or even invented to boost the morale of those at home.

These reports also reached

the front, where soldiers read accounts of events in which they were involved with incredulity. In his book *Disenchantment*, C.E. Montague (soldier, Manchester Guardian journalist, essayist and my great-grandfather), wrote of men who had survived "the most bloody defeat" only to learn of the massacre of their colleagues as "quite a good day — a victory really".

"Anything, then, could figure as anything else in the press — as its own opposite even," Montague concludes. Several million soldiers, for whom the papers were once a bible, returned home with a new maxim when it came to government announcements, ministers' speeches or employers' assurances: you can't believe a word you read. A trust fallen, never to be fully rebuilt.

Simon Montague, London.

MY father was in the Flanders trenches by January 1915, before his 18th birthday. He fought and endured with the Middlesex regiment until the shrapnel gave him a serious wound which troubled him for many years. He never spoke of the war. When it was over, he quietly went about living a modest, responsible life, caring for his family; putting up with unemployment in the Depression, serving on the home front when war

came again; and always a patriot.

He must have had terrible memories, yet only once did he reveal even a hint of them to me. Fifty years after the Armistice, he and I were walking down Whitehall, and we passed the statue of Field Marshal Haig. I asked him what he thought of Haig. He gave only one sentence in reply: "A lot of good men died to get him that statue."

Donald Harris, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

WHILE I agree that the front-line soldiers in the first world war had an horrific time and suffered almost obscene casualties, let it not be forgotten that the other services — Navy, Merchant Navy and Royal Flying Corps — also suffered a very high number of casualties and fought under appalling conditions. The Atlantic in winter storms was no place for the squeamish and neither was flying at 15,000ft without a parachute in the cold of winter.

My father, having survived the Somme, transferred to the RFC. After three-and-a-half hours in the air he joined his squadron in France as the junior observer out of 17. At the end of the first week, he was the senior observer and then flew more or less daily until the war was almost over.

B C Cambray, Croydun, Surrey.

Entente cordiale

WITHOUT disrespect to my great-grandfather William, who fought in the Highland Brigade at Waterloo, I agree with the Gaulish politician who wants this "entente" name changed (Letters, November 10). I suggest we call it Overlord station. This might remind French visitors of Oper-

ation Overlord, the D-Day landing in Normandy, and the fact that over 200,000 Allied troops were killed in the liberation of Europe.

Tom Badstow, Petts Wood, Kent.

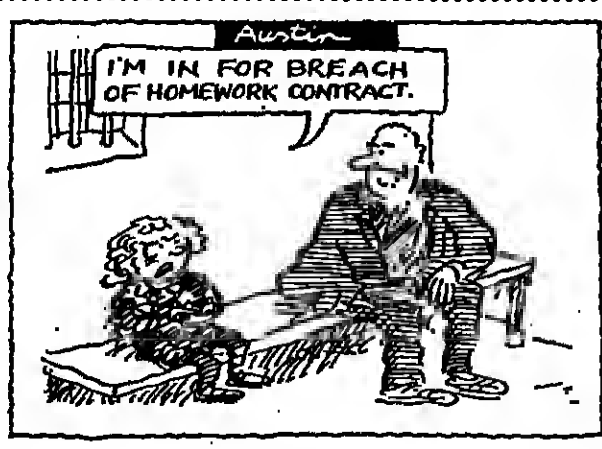
THE French paper *Le Parisien* has pointed out that it was Waterloo Bridge that was named to commemorate the battle and that the station was

named after the bridge. So the name of the station does not commemorate the battle.

Fraser Reavell, Basingstoke, Hants.

WE are doing our own small bit for the entente cordiale. The Prince Regent Bar in Brighton Station is to reopen as Bonaparte's bar.

David Powell, Brighton.



Poll brings out the best in us

THE Guardian poll (November 10) showing the majority of British voters, especially young people, support openly lesbian and gay politicians will, I hope, bring a breath of fresh air to the debate. It would be wonderful if all lesbians and gay men felt they could be open about their sexuality, but this will only happen when we have laws which protect them against discrimination.

It is still legal to sack somebody because they are gay. People won't come out if they fear they could lose their jobs — or not be selected as candidates. A simple law protecting all lesbians and gay men from unjustifiable discrimination would do more than anything to create openness and tolerance in public life.

Angela Mason, Executive Director, Stonewall.

out an existence, what do they think it is like for a gay teenager at school, or a lesbian worker in a factory? John Hunt, Isleworth, Middx.

THIS question of whether to publish the sexual orientation of politicians can be easily solved. It should be required of the editor of the Sun that the sexual proclivity of all his reporters be published, in the public interest, of course. Should he decline, then you have your answer.

Bill Maddock, Sydney, Australia.

YOU ask: "What, one wonders, does Rupert Murdoch think about homosexuals?" (Leader, November 9). Mr Rupert Murdoch is supportive of same sexual orientation and is on the board of trustees of Hollywood Support, set up by leading entertainment industry figures to counter workplace fear and discrimination based on HIV status and sexual orientation. The organisation's prime objective is to ensure a safe working environment free of stigma, fear and bigotry.

Charles Merrill, Chief officer, Citizens Against Discrimination.

Are women getting the role models they really want?

WHY doesn't Tony Blair as leader of a party which is attempting to "sweep away barriers which prevent women from reaching their potential" (Crackdown on domestic violence, November 10) start by showing the patriarchal media that women are important to him, his party and his egalitarian vision by showing up to the re-launch of the Women's Unit? Notes get you off PE, not your responsibility to women in the party and Britain at large.

Katrina Bull, Secretary, Nottingham Labour Women's Council.

themselves and their children. Women are perpetrators in 60 per cent of child abuse cases. The Women's Unit costs over a million pounds a year to run. Why are the taxpayers paying for outdated feminist rhetoric? Erin Fitzgibbon, (founder of the refuge movement), London.

YOUR report claims that the Government is committed to a 50:50 ratio of men and women in public appointments. Yet only in July the Government announced the new chairman — yes they are all men — to head the eight flagship Regional Development Agencies.

Teresa Black, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey.

SHOULD not role models for girls be soldiers, solicitors, businessmen and politicians rather than pop stars? R F Jameson, Dundee.



"Constantly dealing with mutilated bodies in N. Ireland is enough to give anybody nightmares and depression"

As a war correspondent I've seen, first hand, the most appalling injuries and mental pressures our Armed Forces endure, leaving thousands of them crippled for life both physically and mentally.

Ray, as a young NCO in N. Ireland is just one of them. The task of dealing with horrifically mutilated bodies finally took its toll leaving him trapped in a world of nightmares and severe depression.

Combat Stress helps care for victims like Ray with support in the community together with treatment and respite care in one of its three nursing homes.

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Mark Steel

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Poppycock



SOMEHOW the first world war has become a national disaster. It's one of those things about which you're supposed to say "Tut, tut, isn't it dreadful", like a flock of birds covered in oil, or a hurricane. Maybe school-kids are now being taught that, in 1914, just as millions of men were remobilising across northern Europe there was a freak storm which made the

whole region fatally muddy. Then to make matters worse, for the next four years it rained shells, barbed wire and trenches.

So to show respect, everyone has to wear poppy hats. I remember the unlucky ones caught up in it. For example, the Church goes to great lengths to honour poppy day. Yet when this disaster was happening, the official role of the Church was to help recruit officers, in schools, workplaces and churches. So the local vicar or priest would say something along the lines of "Last night I had a call from God. And it seems that at the moment, he is particularly concerned that a 20 square yard puddle behind the post office in Paschen-deels should come under the British sphere of influence rather than that of the Hun. So if you'd all like to form a queue..."

Another group unlikely to forget their poppies are the

royals. Imagine the embarrassment if the Queen isn't wearing one while she's laying her wreath in Paris, suddenly squeaking "Oh, sod it, I've left it in the hotel," and buying one from a passing gypsy.

Every year she leads a parade to remember those who died, although the whole thing was fought in her family's name. In fact Edward VII couldn't wait, agreeing with his friend Lord Fisher back in 1904 that the British should destroy the German navy without even declaring war. What's more, they were related to the German royals, so the other side died in their name as well. That was quite a family feud then. I suppose it's lucky they didn't all have to attend the same wedding in that period, or it might have been even worse.

The tabloid press, especially the Sun, is a fervent campaigner for poppies, parades and two-minute

silences. Yet the popular press did all they could to start the war, screaming that the Germans were about to invade when they knew this wasn't true. The chief protagonist was the Daily Mail, but only because the Sun wasn't around back then to answer any possible peace agreement with "Take a Hunning Jump", and boast "From now until victory — Every day on Page 3 — Wenchies for the Trenches".

PADDY Ashdown's poppy will be in pristine condition, as the Liberals know how to respect war veterans. Indeed they have so much respect for them that they created them in the first place. As historian A.L. Morton wrote: "The attitude of the government in the days before the war could hardly have been more calculated to make its outbreak more certain." Germany was told that Britain would remain neutral

in a conflict between them and France. Encouraged, they invaded Belgium, at which point the Liberals discovered a treaty from 1839 pledging that Belgium would be defended by the British. We must declare war at once!

The Liberals, backed by the Tories, had been increasing arms spending at a ferocious rate, preparing to protect its colonies by putting the growing German power block in its place. Either that or they doubled the size of the army on the off-chance that someone would invade Belgium.

But most upright of all are the heads of the armed forces; people with titles like commander-in-chief, which was also the title of one General Douglas Haig at the Somme. Haig refused to promote men from within the ranks above imbecile upper-class officers, and persisted with tactics which lost 550,000 men. Then he had a furious argument with Lloyd George about

which victory coach he should ride in. He completed one other lasting achievement. He founded the practice of remembering the war dead by wearing a poppy.

The dead of that war were thrown on to the battlefield like pieces of coal on a fire, and when none were left their leaders remembered they had another bag somewhere round the back.

They died because people, in whose interests and profits the war was fought, sent them to die. So they should be remembered. But poppy day is like Reggie Kray holding an annual parade to remember those that fell in the East End gangland wars.

So in only one respect was it like a natural disaster. If Clare Short had been around she'd have sent the troops a packet of Woodbines and a notepad for writing poetry, and announced that campaigning to stop the war was an "irrelevance".

Gerald Long

Powerhouse at Reuters

GERALD Long, who had died aged 75, was one of the most important British-based international media figures of our time. Without him, the Reuters news agency might well have joined the ranks of great imperial organisations which failed to make the grade in the late 20th century, instead of developing into the major world player that it is today.

From any objective point of view, his progress from being a postman's son to heading a company which was to dominate the international news agency business was an extraordinary success story. And yet, when he died in Paris, Long's name was little known, and the extent of what he had done little recognised.

How big firms deal with the final farewell to executives who have changed the course of their history often says much about their internal environment. "The modern Reuters began in the 1930s with the combination of computers and information, it fell to Gerry Long to lead the company into this period of dramatic change," one of his predecessors commented yesterday. "The organisation owes him a debt of gratitude that this transformation was accomplished successfully," (which is roughly like saying that it fell to Alex Ferguson to lead Manchester United's revival and that he owed a debt of gratitude for having done so successfully.) Long was born in York and educated at St Peter's School and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he studied modern languages. From 1943 to 1947 he served in the British army, rising to the rank of major. For two years he was attached to psychological warfare units.

He joined Reuters in 1948 as a sub-editor in London, and served for the next 15 years as a journalist and administrator in Britain, Turkey, France and West Germany.

In 1963, when Long was the agency's manager in Europe, the general manager of Reuters died at his desk in Fleet Street. The agency was in poor financial condition, and was being outpaced by the American Associated Press. Reuters' owners in the British and Commonwealth press could not — or would not — stump up the money to compete and one leading candidate to run the agency advocated taking a subsidy from

the government. Long got the top job with a simple idea: don't count on the owners, don't take government money — do explore the commercial and market information which had been at the heart of the establishment of the agency by Paul Julius Reuter a century earlier.

And there was more: "I gradually changed the old idea that you should break even, into the aim of making a working profit," Long recalled later. And what a profit, as it has turned out during the ensuing three decades. Long might not have negotiated each deal, or even sometimes kept up with what his subordinates were doing, but his was the original genius, a genius which, as so often happens, was overtaken by the rigour of the management bottom line.

Long himself did not profit from Reuters' huge financial success as others did. He lived well enough, but when Reuters was floated on the stockmarkets in London and New York, he had left the company for a brief (and unhappy) time, working for Rupert Murdoch. After that, he moved to Paris, where he said he felt most at home.

FEW MEN had a bigger hinterland — though his effort to give France a new daily newspaper came to nothing — but his unpublished book on Paris may turn out to be a masterpiece. Still, he, and his wife, Anne, were tremendous cooks — and food mattered a lot. Four years after he had pushed me out of the job of editor of Reuters, we made up

over a cassoulet at our place and a *magret de carpe* at his. He might be ridiculed in Britain for his gastronomic exotism — for instance, in a famous feud over farmhouse cheese — but it was all genuine. To many of his staff he was a bully — an impossible, egocentric figure who lived for opera, Glyndebourne and France. I had to deal with more ridiculous storms from his office than anybody should have to put up with in a lifetime — sack this correspondent because he ordered the wrong cognac, get rid of that man because he mispronounced a Spanish verb. In the retelling, it is awful and yet, when I said no, he did not press his case. He made pertinent criticisms and agreed to most expansion of our interna-

tional coverage, as well as launching Reuters into the United States and making the most hard-hitting speeches against the attempt of Unesco to curb the freedom of information in the 1970s. Two months ago, I bumped into him on the Eurostar train from Paris to London, and we spent the journey in one of the best conversations I have had for a long time. He was obviously below the peak of his form physically, but he had a lot to say that made eminent sense — about everything from the state of France to the condition of the company he had set on its road to the stars. That evening, he turned up at a party to launch a book by a close mutual friend and roared with laughter at the jokes of those a third of his age.

Yet impossible as he could be, Gerald Long was not just a visionary but also, behind the bravado, an honest man whom you could look in the eye and be sure he would not betray you. His judgment, in the end, was spot on. Long performed one of the greatest media feats seen in the last 35 years, by turning a loser of a company into an international winner — and he always believed in the importance of honest journalism. What he did should not be neglected simply because, like, as they say, he will not be seen again. He is survived by his wife, two sons and three daughters.

Jonathan Fenby
Gerald Long, news executive, born August 22, 1923; died November 8, 1998

Chris Chapman

Foe of fraud

CHRIS Chapman, who has died of cancer, aged 56, was a distinguished and inventive biochemist who lost his job after exposing scientific fraud at Leeds University and the city's general infirmary. His dogged refusal to let the matter rest — reluctantly, because his first love was research and his practical use within the National Health Service — led to extra protection for whistleblowers and, eventually, his own reinstatement.

It took a punishing toll, however, and lost the health service part of the prime of an unusually co-operative, unselfish mind. In a field notorious for prima donnas, Chapman shared his discoveries in the cutting-edge field of immunoproteins (purify checks on proteins) and worked overtime to make them cheaply available to NHS hospitals.

Although a socialist to the marrow, he thus became a pioneer of internal income generation, showing how it could save millions by undercutting external suppliers (drug company reps called him "The man who won't buy anything"). But ironically, the pressure for results which was generated by the Thatcher government's embrace of this principle led to the Leeds whistleblowing affair.

Chapman had already privately exposed £10,000-worth of financial irregularities in a joint Leeds University/general infirmary project, when in 1988 he discovered a more serious fraud. A fellow biochemist, Dr Stuart Evans, had made false claims about manufacturing a pure, potentially cancer-curing protein, in the

process wasting large sums of public funds. The subsequent handling of the affair by Chapman's superiors, Dr Ian Barnes and Professor John Whicker, became a classic of bow not to deal with whistleblowing, as well as revealing a world where the boundaries between science and commerce had become blurred. The affair became a national scandal when Chapman was made redundant the day before his 50th birthday — losing pension rights — in a departmental reorganisation.

HE WAS the only one of 200 staff to lose his job. Among indictments was a scathing editorial in *Nature* which underlined the lethal effects of the scandal on academic standards and Leeds' reputation. The future and several inquiries, including one by the former Labour home secretary Lord Merlyn-Rees, led to Chapman's reinstatement but much about the affair has never been resolved. Merlyn-Rees, who recommended greater protection for whistleblowers, concluded that he could "not be a substitute for a Court of Law", which is what Chapman always felt had been required.

Chris Chapman was the son of a leather chemist and showed an innate stropiness early when he berated farmers in Glastonbury for beating cattle on the way to market. He got into trouble at primary school and put in a lower stream as a "problem", he was rescued by an educational psychologist who concluded: "There is no need to worry about Christopher. The world needs more like him."

He won a place in the England cross-country team, then graduated in biochemistry from Sheffield University and began at Leeds in 1968.

Chapman was sustained by a love of nature — a colleague considered him the closest thing to a nature lover in the world — and his family who loyally backed him through five years when the Leeds affair — as so often with whistleblowers — became close to an obsession. He fought doggedly for Labour in a safe Liberal ward, helped defeat an opt-out attempt by his children's high school and was often seen wildly cycling. He leaves his wife, Sheila, daughter, Sally, and son, Rob.

Martin Walwright

Sir John Maddox writes: The first I heard of Chapman was by means of a long letter in which he detailed his suspicions of his Leeds colleagues. Nature had been reporting and commenting on a number of cases of academic misconduct so it was natural he should have written to us. Yet the charges he levelled at his colleagues were accompanied by such meticulous detail that it was natural to suspect that he was a man with a grudge. In a couple of telephone conversations, he talked much as a lawyer would have done, quoting facts from a dossier of some kind. Eventually he came to London (at Nature's expense) for lunch. Almost immediately, it was plain that he was an honest man: deception by a member of the academic staff had made a monkey of more than a year's experimental work. It was also clear that he had



Whistleblower of NHS fraud... Chris Chapman on a demonstration

been hurt by the supposition of established academics that a mere technician could have nothing useful to say on the science on which he dived attendance. We promised to

investigate further, but meanwhile the university and the NHS trust from which he had been seconded stupidly chose to make him redundant. We protested in a leading article.

Lord Merlyn-Rees resurrected his reputation, but could not undo the hurt.

Chris Chapman, scientist, born July 16, 1942; died November 4, 1998

Letter

John Beckett writes: Douglas Johnson's obituary of Paul Misrahi (November 4) says that he adapted the "English" song *We've Gotta Hang Out the Washing On the Siegfried Line* "for the French in 1939". This song was composed by two Irishmen, Jimmy Kennedy and Michael Carr (I have the original sheet music). I

would imagine that Johnson wouldn't, for example, claim that Cole Porter was a writer of English songs. Jimmy Kennedy largely forgotten today composed many ballads now considered standards — *South of the Border*, *Red Sails in the Sunset* and *Isle of Capri*, not forgetting the party piece *Hokey Cokey*!

RICHARD MABBY

A Country Diary

CHILTERN: The torrential rains of the past few weeks have brought on one of the regular Chiltern migrations — the flint floods. Down the middle of almost every sunken lane, drifts of flint have been washed out of the fields above and lie in wisps and ridges like shingle-bars at low tide. Heaps of small flints, mixed up with leaf litter, lie at the bottom of ditches, crowding around drain entrances, or stacked against tree trunks. In the fields themselves, they seem to have defied gravity and bobbed to the surface.

The conventional image of the Chilterns is that they are a conglomeration of all kinds of stones and dross, packed together during glacial movements. Vast mounds sometimes turn up during building excavations, and over the years have found their way as ornaments on to pub counters. They are thought to be lucky, and chips and slices of them are still sold as "wooden" (including sponges). Somehow,

their siliceous matter has leached out and redeposited as this hard, lustrous rock, one of the most complete transmutations of living matter it is possible to imagine. Split open flints are steel grey and have the fugitive taste of metal on the tongue, and they were crucial raw materials in the neolithic life we lived as kids out in the fields. The human landscape still seems redolent with them, packed into walls and churches, and sometimes into the boulders of our other local rock, puddingstone. This is a kind of natural concrete, a conglomerate of all kinds of stones and dross, packed together during glacial movements. Vast mounds sometimes turn up during building excavations, and over the years have found their way as ornaments on to pub counters. They are thought to be lucky, and chips and slices of them are still sold as "wooden" (including sponges). Somehow,

RICHARD MABBY

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN A REPORT headed, And now here's the outlook: misery for millions, Page 3, November 3, we said the rise in global sea level will be 21cm (3.2in) by 2050. The measurement in cm was correct. It becomes 8.2in (oot 3.2).

SPEAKING of Queen Victoria's thoughts about a possible successor to Tennyson as poet laureate, Page 17, November 9, we said "Browning and William Morris were considered too dangerous." Browning had been dead for nearly three years (Browning died December 12, 1889; Tennyson died October 6, 1892).

SEVERAL readers queried the accuracy of our quotation from Lawrence Binyon's *Poem for the Future*, Page 6, November 10. We think we should have said: *They shall grow not old (rather than They shall not grow old); we cannot find any authority for saying nor the years' contempt, rather than condemn.*

The version we intended to quote is in *The Faber Book of War Poetry* edited by Kenneth Baker, Faber, 1996.

IN OUR Review of Reviews, Page 17, The Editor, November 7, we underestimated the critics' enthusiasm for the *RSC* touring production of *Richard III*. We gave it an average score (out of 10) of 4.3. That should have been 5.4.

THE AUTHOR of the visual arts feature, "You are what you keep," Pages 8 and 9, 62, yesterday, was Jay Griffiths (not Jaye).

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 5555 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surfers mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Tottenham Court Road, London, EC2A 4PU. Fax: 0171 239 5997. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

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FinanceGuardian

City analyses prospects in succession race at Britain's leading retailer

Notebook

Sick economies and quack doctors



Edited by
Larry Elliott

OCTOBER was supposed to be the month of market meltdown, if only because that's the way it was in 1929 and 1987. But it didn't happen.

Lower interest rates and hopes that the IMF and the G7 between them would save Brazil from a disorderly devaluation meant that equity prices rallied strongly.

The feeling now is of crisis averted and the Dow Jones was edging towards 9,000 yesterday. By that, of course, the markets mean financial crisis, because the economic crisis that started in South-east Asia last July has far from run its course.

To take but one example, estimates suggest that 40 million people in Russia could be threatened by starvation this winter. Russia is shaping up like Indonesia, but there only far worse. In Indonesia, the population is at least not trying to survive in minus 40 degrees of frost.

Even if the markets stabilise, every country in the West faces slower growth next year than it was previously expecting; the question is merely how much weaker growth will be.

But the assumption that everything has now reverted to normal in the markets rests on one of two premises, both highly questionable.

The first is that equity prices are fairly valued because the prospects for growth next year have been miraculously boosted by the recent easing of monetary policy.

Wall Street valuations, which have pushed price-earnings ratios back to the historically high levels before the 1929 crash, presuppose that US corporate earnings in 1999 will grow by at least 15 per cent. A less sanguine interpretation would be that they are more likely to fall by 15 per cent.

The second premise is that there is no link between the performance of the real economy and the performance of the financial markets. But to believe in this theory you have to believe in the idea of a new paradigm for the US economy, under which all the old rules can be torn up because the economy has reached a new plateau of achievement.

This line of argument is about as convincing as the quack doctors who dispensed remedies from the shows that rolled into old Wild West towns.

But the health of the US economy — and therefore that of the rest of the world — depends on Wall Street continuing to display the "irrational exuberance" that concerned Alan Greenspan in late 1996.

Indeed, as one City economist put it yesterday, the last

time an economy was as dependent on its stock market was Japan in the late 1980s. And we all know what eventually happened there.

M&S rides storm

THE sense of crisis hovering over Michael House is almost certainly overdone. The return of Sir Richard Greenbury from India, to help deal with the succession issue, was among the factors which started to bring some sense back to the company's share price yesterday.

Sure Marks & Spencer is a company which has still to resolve a problem at the top: but when all is said and done it has four competent managing directors.

Much of the problem seems to rest with the non-executive directors. The idea of independent directors is to protect the interests of shareholders by, among other things, creating the conditions for an orderly succession.

Sir Richard, as chairman and chief executive, effectively played his part when he promoted the four joint managing directors Keith Oates, Guy McCracken, Peter Salisbury and Andrew Stone, all of whom could spend up to 10 years in one of two top posts without any serious misgivings on age.

This gives the non-executives a rich choice of internal candidates, with a range of experience. None of the four managing-directors should be discounted nor should the next generation of directors and divisional directors, who are also talented. This nominations committee needs to make a choice and win the approval of the board for change, ignoring the lobbying campaign by Oates and others. As for M&S shareholders they can be thankful that during this consumer recession, there is still an experienced retailer at the helm.

Brown alternative

THE Government's unfortunate problems with the average earnings over the past few months mean that this is not the ideal time for the Treasury to be thinking about new ways of measuring growth. That said, Gordon Brown's plan to provide an alternative measure of gross domestic product and the performance of the financial markets. But to believe in this theory you have to believe in the idea of a new paradigm for the US economy, under which all the old rules can be torn up because the economy has reached a new plateau of achievement.

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Runners line up for M&S stakes

Janice Worman and Julia Finch

THE field of runners for succession at Marks & Spencer appears to be widening as the race enters its final straight, with deputy chairman Keith Oates running out of steam, favouring Peter Salisbury gaining ground, former golden boy Lord Stone of Blackheath not yet out of the running — and a dark horse appearing on the horizon.

Sir Richard Greenbury, the redoubtable executive chairman of Britain's largest and best-loved retailer, cut short his trip to India and returned to London this week for meetings after speculation reached new heights. An announcement is expected after a board meeting next week.

Deputy chairman Keith Oates, once the preferred successor, has damaged his prospects after unveiling a detailed plan for radical changes, including decentralisation, a global sourcing policy and drastic cuts to the 22-member board. "He has written his own P45," said one City insider.

But the prospects of the current incumbent may not be much healthier. "This is a fight for the future of the company," said a City source. "It's not acceptable to have Greenbury in an executive position for much longer." It was likely, he said, that Lord Stone or an external City figure would take the chief executive role while Salisbury might find himself damaged by his close association with Greenbury.

One M&S insider has suggested that there could be other, less obvious contenders if Greenbury can hold on to his position until his planned departure date in 2001.

David Norgrove, who is currently a divisional director, may be one candidate. Mr Norgrove has been nominated by the board to conduct a study of Marks and Spencer's business strategy. Chris Littwood, who runs M&S's North American operations, is also mentioned as a potential front runner.

Last week the High Street

group announced its first profits fall since 1991.

The traditionally secretive retailer has closed ranks around the debate of succession and refuses to admit that there is any disquiet in the boardroom. But analysts spoke of their frustration at the group's attitude.

Two years ago, Andrew Stone, the then joint managing director with Guy McCracken, was favourite to succeed Greenbury. What followed is something of a mystery. He was moved from the clothing division to food. It was felt that if he could turn around the food division he would be fully qualified to take over the helm. He has since taken a peerage and a bigger role in the Labour Party, which seemed to rule him out. But he would, however, be a good compromise.

Fund managers now believe that Sir Richard and the M&S non-executive directors face a difficult situation. Sticking to the original succession plan — where Sir Richard would remain chairman and one of the two joint managing directors would become chief executive — will allow directors to continue jockeying for position rather than concentrating on sorting out M&S's business problems. Making rapid changes, however, could give the impression that the difficulties are worse than admitted.

The sudden appointment of a new chief executive or chairman now, said one, would be "a sign of panic". But he also warned that City opinion of Marks & Spencer was changing rapidly. "Marks has always been the stock to have, but I don't think it is any more. The shares are still standing at a bit of a premium to the market and Marks is not going to sort itself out quickly."

He said M&S probably needed Sir Richard's experience more now than at any time in the recent past and that, when the time came to choose a successor, investors would not favour any of the potential internal candidates.

"The City would prefer someone from outside. If they appoint Oates, City investors will think there has been no change at all."



Marks and Spencer's management team is under scrutiny from City investors, as the retailer finalises changes. Seen here, from left, are Andrew Stone, Guy McCracken, Sir Richard Greenbury, Peter Salisbury and Keith Oates

How the men at the top measure up

Richard Greenbury

JOINED M & S 40 years ago. Chairman and chief executive for 10 years. Widely respected as a retailer, but feared by staff for his autocratic style. Admirer of former US president Harry Truman, and Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, who is a close friend. Poor relationship with the City where comments include "management by brutality", "insensitivity and paranoia", "never understood the City", and "brilliant merchant". Reluctant to give up the helm and determined to decide his successor. Would be "hoped" as non-executive chairman because he would always be "sticking his ear in". But in difficult market circumstances his experience is seen as essential.

Keith Oates

DEPUTY chairman, joined M & S in 1984. Seen as a relative newcomer by the board after "only 15 years". "Urbane, relaxed, civilised kind of guy who can be quite gritty when it comes down to it." Did a good job on the introduction of financial services. Weaker in general retailing. Much better at dealing with the City than Greenbury. Appalled at the way Greenbury comes across; can be seen winning the latest poll by independent analysts' meetings. Former employers include IBM and Black & Decker.

Peter Salisbury

LARGELY unknown in the City. Quiet and reserved. "A very solid, sturdy performer". "M & S through and through". At M & S for 28 years; joined at 21. Only emerged as a contender with his recent promotion to joint managing director. An LSE graduate who has run footwear, home furnishings, women's wear, personal and store operations. Solid on the ground knowledge of retail operations; less financial expertise than Oates. Has (relative) youth on his side: at 49 he is seven years younger than the 56-year-old Oates.

Lord Stone

JOINT managing director. Runs M & S food operation. Did excellent job in clothing, which is perhaps missing him. Food now a problem after other food retailers including Tesco and Waitrose moved into M & S territory. Growth slow and at times non-existent. Since he was made a Labour peer by Tony Blair, and increased his party activities, relations with Greenbury said to have soured. Great supporter of itself, but also responsible for developing M & S sourcing in other Middle Eastern countries. Possible compromise candidate.

PROFILES: JANICE WORMAN

Junor proves victim and villain in John Lewis book row

Terry Macalister finds the staff in revolt at the famous store chain

CIVIL war has broken out within the normally staid ranks of the John Lewis Partnership over the controversial book written by Penny Junor about Prince Charles.

Staff fear that Ms Junor has brought Britain's biggest department store chain into disrepute in her dual role as both author of Charles: Victim or Villain and head of corporate communications at John Lewis.

Employees believe custom-

ers may be offended and boycott the stores. The 37,500 staff, who also own the partnership, are aware that last week's sales figures at the group were down by 5.6 per cent on the year before, underlining the general slow-down in the high street.

But staff seemed unaware that Ms Junor was actually serving out her notice as the dispute about the book and its author surfaced this week in letters to the John Lewis in-house magazine, The Gazette.

has historically been used as a sounding board by management and employees.

The current edition contains a wave of protest but also a sharp response from chairman, Sir Stuart Hampson, who insists "we should not exaggerate the risk to our trade as a result of Miss Junor's writing".

One correspondent says: "It is with great displeasure that I have to put pen to paper about the fact that our general editor, Penny Junor, has decided to publish a book. Should not the partnership be more sensitive about her other outside interests? What is now her position? Will she

remain with the partnership?"

Another letter says: "As a gesture of disgust and protest I shall forfeit my enjoyment as one of your readers while she continues to occupy that post."

A third correspondent writes: "I am astonished that, with the values and profile of this company at risk, the higher levels of management within this organisation have not put Penny Junor on the back of a lorry."

Sir Stuart says he will allow no further letters on the subject, insisting: "No purpose would be served by opening up a potentially acrimonious debate in the columns of The Gazette."

Ms Junor has been working as communications director at John Lewis since 1994. Her book was not published until this week but has been serialised in a Sunday newspaper since October 25.

It has attracted criticism because it suggested that Princess Diana was the first of the couple to commit adultery.

Sir Stuart says the book will be sold at John Lewis stores. "It will sit alongside other royal titles and the prominence that it does or does not enjoy will rest on the level of demand."



Author Penny Junor: the communications director

Fire scams cost £80m

By Stuart

STRUGGLING entrepreneurs who torch their businesses are costing the insurance industry around £80 million a year in fraudulent claims.

A seminar hosted yesterday by the Arson Prevention Bureau — a fire-fighting group set up by the Home Office and the Association of British Insurers — showed these insurance scams are not just the territory of soap opera characters like EastEnders' Frank Butcher who incinerated his car lot.

Arson is in five fires in commercial and public buildings is started to reap illegal

gains. In one case a man razed his curry house in Harrow, north London, just months after opening it because he was saddled with debt. Following forensic investigation by the police he admitted that his insurance claim was fraudulent and he was sentenced to three years in prison.

In another case, the owner of a shop who claimed a fire was the result of discarded matches, was found guilty of starting the blaze when he was unable to keep up repayments on a business loan.

Not all arson is fraudulent, that is, carried out for insurance purposes. A spokesman from the APB said that an arson attack occurs in at least

three schools every day, causing around £43 million of damage each year, mostly the work of bored and disgruntled current or former pupils. One Bristol security man set fire to a warehouse and watched it burn simply to "brighten up his day".

Figures from the Home Office show that arson is a growing problem. In 1996 there were 90,500 malicious fires, a jump of 7 per cent on the year before. This total includes 37,500 buildings deliberately set alight — around one in three of building fires reported.

The APB, established in 1991, advises businesses how to reduce the risk of being victims of arsonists.

UK's top pay 'lags behind'

Terry Macalister

BRITISH executives have been unfairly tarred with the "fat cats" label, according to a survey that shows directors' pay levels lagging behind most in Europe.

Excessive wage rises have dominated the news, and a Guardian investigation into boardroom remuneration revealed top executives receiving 18 per cent increases last year. But the latest poll by independent pay consultant, Monks Partnership, suggests that it is just the largest British companies that are really pushing up salaries.

The report says the average executive of a medium-sized company with a £50 million turnover is paid less than his or her counterpart in countries as unlikely as Greece and Ireland. But pay experts point out this does not take into account bonuses or share options, which are more likely to be handed out in Britain.

Switzerland is still the top payer for this size of company, with Spain and Austria close behind. Britain is placed 11th in the league table, followed only by the Nordic countries.

The Institute of Directors last night seized on the figures as proof that the debate on executive pay had become distorted by a handful of high-profile cases involving large companies.

Ruth Lea, director of policy at the IoD, said: "We have been saying for some time that executives in small and medium-sized companies are modestly remunerated. We think pay should be linked to performance but it is clear that it is often linked to size."

After taking account of tax and cost-of-living, Britain's directors are estimated by Monks to receive an average £44,700, compared to £76,600 in Switzerland, £58,600 in Germany and £49,800 in France.

Queen to visit 'City at work'

Alex Brummer
Financial Editor

THE Queen is to make an unprecedented visit to see at first-hand the workings of the City on November 18 as part of a Buckingham Palace effort to recognise the changing shape of Britain's economy.

She will preside over the official opening of the headquarters of the Financial Services Authority at Canary Wharf, the super regulator created by Chancellor Gordon Brown.

The programme also includes a session with the monetary policy committee of the Bank of England.

Mr Brown, who has shown little tolerance for ceremony

since he became Chancellor, will be among the guests at special Buckingham Palace reception for leading City figures in the evening.

In recognition of the changing shape of ownership in the City, the core of Her Majesty's trip will be a visit to the stockbrokers Merrill Lynch. David Komansky — chairman of the New York firm which has just laid-off 5 per cent of its workforce worldwide, including some 400 people in London — is flying to London to greet his royal guest.

After the visit to Merrill Lynch, where the Queen will spend time on the bond trading floor, she will meet with the Duke of Edinburgh, who will pay a separate visit to another American institution, the Bankers' Trust.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.589	Germany 2.7152	Malaysia 6.296	Singapore 2.88
Austria 13.04	Greece 457.28	Mexico 0.61	South Africa 9.09
Belgium 58.09	Hong Kong 12.48	Netherlands 3.0516	Spain 228.79
Canada 2.48	India 70.15	New Zealand 3.05	Sweden 12.88
Cyprus 0.80	Ireland 1.0848	Norway 12.13	Switzerland 2.24
Denmark 10.39	Israel 7.17	Portugal 275.92	Turkey 468.400
Finland 8.33	Italy 2.700	Saudi Arabia 6.11	USA 1.6192
France 5.0791			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shekel and leu)

News in brief

Rover row delays Longbridge deal

0



Four more... Graham Thorpe hammers the ball away to the boundary on his way to an unbeaten 223, his highest ever score, at the Adelaide Oval

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM CHADWICK

Tour match: South Australia v England XI

Record stand gives tour a kick-start

Mike Selvey in Adelaide sees Thorpe and Ramprakash share a much-needed run reveal

IN MODERN times English cricket has often scaled new peaks only to find on the other side new depths into which its progress would resemble an Alpine stage of the Tour de France.

Until yesterday this tour side had struggled along such an inept course that comfort was actually being drawn from the uncanny similarities with the "can't bat, can't bowl, can't field" start made by Mike Gatting's ultimately conquering side of a dozen years ago.

Such unworthy notions have been kicked into a cocked Akubra at the Oval here now and in the fullness of time Mike Atherton's bizarre dismissal at 4.31 on Monday afternoon may be viewed as the moment this touring party came of age.

His departure brought together Graham Thorpe and Mark Ramprakash, each with

a point to prove and a game to save, and slightly more than 24 hours later when the predicted rain arrived to wash away the remains of the final day 40 minutes into the last session, they were still together. They had resurrected England from the depths of 80 for four, with defeat looming, with an unbeaten fifth-wicket partnership of 377 scored at slightly better than a run a minute.

It was the highest stand for that wicket by any side touring Australia and 306 runs came from the 74 overs bowled yesterday; the pair will not find a feather big enough to suit this particular cap.

Thorpe, whose back injury last summer cast some doubt, not least in his own mind, that he might not make the tour, batted for 210 minutes to end unbeaten on 223.

It was by a single run the highest score of his career. He hit 23 fours and four sixes and

scored 125 in the two hours between lunch and tea in an exhilarating display of attacking cricket that provided a stark contrast to the graft of the morning.

He and his partner added 194 in 33 overs. Ramprakash was less ebullient but by the end, with the game long since safe, he played with real freedom. He batted eight minutes less than Thorpe and scored 140, with 18 fours.

The partnership went some way towards dispelling the notion that English players are clueless against spin. Evan Arnold, a leg-spinner making his debut for the Redbacks, is no Clive Grinnell, although his bowling arm is about as low, but on Monday, as Thorpe and Ramprakash set about repairing the damage, he sent down 15 overs for only 25 runs, which according to one newspaper was Good News for Warner.

Well, the Good News is that Arnold sent down a further 10 overs yesterday and they cost 94 more runs, 20 of them coming from four successive deliveries as Thorpe carried him to and beyond the midwicket boundary. The young off-spinner Andrew Cook conceded 79 from 20 overs yesterday. Experiences do not come much more chastening.

Later Ramprakash, in the glow of achievement after the commemorative scoreboard snaps had been taken, said: "The local press have been negative in general so it is nice to prove a point. Just as we did against South Africa we have shown we are hard to beat and we are not just going to roll over."

Thorpe batted while not feeling too well and his innings was not entirely without blemish. Twice, at 149 and 198, Mark Harriy made a mess of catches at mid-on that were only moderately difficult, and on 220 Jason Gillespie, who had bowled a beautifully testing spell with the

Scoreboard

ENGLAND First Innings 167 (Hussell 57, G G Cook 51).
SOUTH AUSTRALIA First Innings 325 (G S. Steyn 143, J M. Vaughan 58, Cook 44).
ENGLAND Second Innings (overnight 149-4): 223 (M F Ramprakash not out 140, G G Cook 116, M F Ramprakash not out 116).
SOUTH AUSTRALIA Second Innings (overnight 149-4): 223 (M F Ramprakash not out 140, G G Cook 116, M F Ramprakash not out 116).
ENGLAND Total (over 4, 140 overs): 427.
SOUTH AUSTRALIA Total (over 4, 140 overs): 427.
ENGLAND First Innings 167 (Hussell 57, G G Cook 51).
SOUTH AUSTRALIA First Innings 325 (G S. Steyn 143, J M. Vaughan 58, Cook 44).
ENGLAND Second Innings (overnight 149-4): 223 (M F Ramprakash not out 140, G G Cook 116, M F Ramprakash not out 116).
SOUTH AUSTRALIA Second Innings (overnight 149-4): 223 (M F Ramprakash not out 140, G G Cook 116, M F Ramprakash not out 116).

Boxing

Hamed puts future in his own hands

Don Beet on the world champion's plan to ditch Warren in favour of self-promotion

NASEEM HAMED, never lacking in self-confidence, is set to ditch his promoter Frank Warren and negotiate his own fight deals in future.

The epistolary World Boxing Organisation featherweight champion has come to the end of a 10-fight contract with Warren, and Riath Hamed, his brother and business manager, said: "Naz is exercising his right to retain his worldwide rights and control his own destiny."

"We have four years' experience in boxing management and Naz has many more of promoters and managers. Whatever decisions we make will not be done on a whim. We will be taking advice from lawyers and commercial experts."

More than 100 million people worldwide saw Hamed's recent 10-round points victory over Wayne McCullough in Atlantic City and the fighter and his advisers believe the "huge interest in him" is not generating the cash it should.

In truth, much of the interest in the 24-year-old from Sheffield attracted in the United States was of the kind he could have done without. He upset sponsors and promoters alike by arriving late because of a visa mix-up and then he antagonised journalists and fight fans with his boorish behaviour towards them and, initially, towards his opponent.

Nothing damned by that experience and his unimpressive performance afterwards, he now seems prepared to go it alone. If he carries through

his proposals Hamed will hire promoters to provide opponents, find venues and handle tickets, but he will control all financial aspects rather than the current situation in which he receives a cut of the overall purse.

Should Hamed make a success of the venture he would become one of the richest fighters in history and would change the fight-game scene by switching control from the promoters to the fighters and their managers.

He could, however, encounter problems in trying to attract credible opponents from the few big-fight promoters who control the world's best boxers.

Warren refused to comment on the proposals but said he had received communication from Hamed's brother. "Riath has asked me to meet Naz when he returns from holiday to discuss the future, at which time I will decide what I am going to do," he said.

Riath Hamed, insisting "every avenue will be explored", claimed that his brother could net \$50 million but added: "This is not about greed. It is about Naz being paid what he is worth in the world market. He is not property throughout the world and we are being besieged by offers from everywhere."

Offers might not be forthcoming in future if Hamed looks as poor in his next fight as he did against McCullough. He had predicted a third-round knock-out but was savaged by boxing writers for his lacklustre performance against a drab opponent.

Calzaghe faces Canadian southpaw in title defence

JOE CALZAGHE will make his third defence of his World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight title against Syd Vandepool, a southpaw from Kitchener, Ontario, in Cardiff on December 6.

Vandepool has been drawn from outside the short-list of four named by the promoter Frank Warren last week, another Canadian Eric Lucas, the former World Boxing Council middleweight champion Keith Holmes, Australia's Rick Thornberry and the Sheffield veteran Herol Graham.

Lucas and Holmes declined to fight the big-hitting Welshman and Graham will have to be content with a shot at the vacant British super-middleweight title against David Starie at the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre in London on November 21.

Vandepool, who comes from the town in which Lennox Lewis was brought up, has won 24 fights and lost only one.

"I'm ready to face anybody in the division," said Calzaghe. "I know I'm the best super-middleweight in the world and I'm looking forward to putting a string of victories together to prove it."

Calzaghe has not fought since stopping the previously unbeaten Paraguayan Juan Carlos Gimenez in April, after which he needed an operation on his right wrist.

Erhan's Mickey Cantwell will fight the Irishman at the Boxing Federation straw-weight champion Zolani Petelo, a South African who has won 13 of his 17 fights, on the same Cardiff bill. Cantwell lost previous WBO challenges against Jesse Matilla in February 1997 and Eric Jamili last December.

Ponting pounds Pakistan

AUSTRALIA, ruthless to the last, finished their triumphant tour of Pakistan yesterday much as they began it — with a flourish. Making light of a formidable target of 316 in Lahore, they completed a 3-0 sweep of the one-day series with astonishing ease, racking up the highest winning score by a side batting second in a limited-overs international.

A record partnership of 193 between Adam Gilchrist (103) and Ricky Ponting (124 not out) enabled the tourists to get home by six wickets with seven balls to spare, overhauling Sri Lanka's 313 for seven against Zimbabwe in 1993-94 and thus setting the seal on an expedition that had already seen them take their first Test series in Pakistan since 1960. "A great achievement," said their captain, Steve Waugh. "I said we

wanted to win every one of the one-day games."

Ijaz Ahmed (111) and Yousuf Youhana (100) added 162 to supply the impetus for Pakistan's 315 for eight, their best-ever total against Australia. The real onslaught was still to come. Undaunted by the early loss of Mark Waugh, Gilchrist compiled his second hundred in limited-overs internationals and Ponting earned the man-of-the-match award with his fifth. Their alliance was the highest for any wicket between Australia and Pakistan in such contests, surpassing the 175 for the fourth wicket between Dean Jones and Steve Waugh at Perth in 1987.

Zimbabwe beat Sri Lanka by 24 runs in Sharjah to reach the final of the Sharjah Champions Trophy at the expense of the World Cup holders, who lost all four round-robin

Lara apology to South Africa

BRIAN LARA yesterday apologised to the "people of South Africa" for the delayed start of West Indies' first official tour to the republic.

"Sorry to the people of South Africa for the delay," said West Indies' captain on the team's arrival in Johannesburg. "We're here to play cricket. It's important to our country, it's an important tour, a Test series and we're looking forward to giving it 100 per cent."

Lara stonewalled questions about the dispute that had put the tour in jeopardy and seen him and his vice-captain, Carl Hooper sacked, and then reinstated after Monday's peace deal.

"The West Indies Cricket Board and the West Indies players have had a discussion and that is totally confidential," he said.

After the days of brinkmanship when it seemed that no West Indian player would set foot in South Africa, the fact that their fast bowlers Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose failed to arrive yesterday was a just a minor hiccup.

The pair reached London too late to catch Monday night's flight from Heathrow. But the United Cricket Board of South Africa's managing director Ali Bacher was confident they would arrive today when the West Indians are due to open their three-month tour against Gauteng in Soweto.

On board the plane the batsman Jimmy Adams became the tour's first injury victim when he managed to cut the small finger of his right hand with a bread-knife.

Bacher, who is also a qualified GP, explained: "Luckily a young lady, who has just qualified as a doctor was there to put three stitches into his finger and I was called back into medical practice when I assisted."

Adams... early cut

Tennis

Kafelnikov on his winning way in attempt to deny Britons

YEVGENY Kafelnikov, the last finished champion and second seed in the Kremlin Cup, beat his fellow Russian Andrei Cherkasov, a wild card, 6-3, 6-4 in Moscow yesterday to maintain his challenge for one of the two undecided places in the ATP Championships in Hanover later this month.

Kafelnikov stands eighth on the ATP rankings and is competing with Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman for the final places in Germany. Neither Rusedski nor Henman played in Stockholm yesterday.

Despite his current standing, Kafelnikov needs to win in Moscow. If he reaches the final his likely opponent is the top seed Alex Corretja of Spain, who yesterday defeated John van Lottum of the Netherlands, 6-3, 7-5. Corretja, who is No. 6 on the ATP

Athletics

McKiernan to skip cross-country for marathon offensive

Duncan Mackay

IRELAND will be denied the chance to see Catherine McKiernan go for Sonia O'Sullivan's crown at the World Cross-country Championships in Belfast next March.

Following McKiernan's third consecutive marathon success, in Amsterdam last week, her coach Joe Doonan said her training programme would be geared to another big marathon run in the spring.

"The timing of the cross-country championship does not allow us to run in Belfast," he said. "At that point Catherine will be in the final stages of her preparations for another marathon and it is not feasible to do the two."

McKiernan, four times runner-up in the world cross-country, said: "I would love to run in Belfast but it would affect the rest of next year's programme." Her decision will disappoint those who had hoped to see her take on

O'Sullivan, Ireland's other outstanding distance runner.

A bidding war has begun between the three most prestigious spring marathons — London, Boston and Rotterdam — to secure McKiernan's participation. After the high promise of her debut at the distance in Berlin, April's success in London brought her to the attention of a wider public and inevitably there will be pressure on her to defend her title.

Boston, where she finished

second to Lynn Jennings in the 1992 World Cross Country Championship, would also have obvious appeal for an Irish runner but, in terms of record breaking, Rotterdam, with its flat terrain, offers the most realistic option.

It was there where Tegla Loroupe set the world best of 2hrs 20min 47sec last April, and it offers McKiernan a chance of improving on the career best figures of 2:22:23 she recorded in adverse conditions in Amsterdam.

Sport in brief

Badminton

Neil Waterman, from Maidstone, made a surprise England debut in the opening contest of a six-match series against China in Gateshead, writes Richard Jago. John Quinn's injury and Ian Pearson's illness saw Waterman

team up with James Anderson and lose 15-9, 15-9 to Xia Xuzhe and Cai Yun as England went down 4-1.

draw against the co-leader, Luis Comas of Spain.

Six riders with the Dutch team TVM were found to have used illegal doping substances during the Tour de France, the French newspaper Le Parisien claimed yesterday. During a medical examination in July four of the six were found to have

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Luger primed to shoot down Dutch, page 13

Luton aim to give Barnsley chop, page 14

Thorpe leaves Redbacks blue, page 15

Hamed grasps the purse-strings, page 15

SportsGuardian

Simple Minds singer promises a miracle



Ground for concern... Kenny Dalglish ponders a possible takeover of the Parkhead club he represented with distinction as a player

PHOTOMONTAGE: JOHN WORMLEY

Dalglish heads Celtic bid

Vivek Chaudhary and Laurie Laird raise £140 million doubts

KENNY DALGLISH and Jim Kerr, lead singer of Simple Minds, are believed to head a consortium aiming to take over Celtic football club but football finance specialists doubted yesterday whether the pair have the required financial backing.

Dalglish, who made 324 appearances for Celtic, and Kerr, a fanatical supporter of the Scottish Premier League team, are reportedly intending to invest in the club themselves and hoping to take control in an estimated £140 million buy-out with backing from the City.

News of the proposed deal is contrary to the publicly stated desire of the chairman

and managing director Fergus McCann that he wants to sell his 51 per cent holding to fans and existing shareholders. McCann does not want a single powerful consortium to dominate Celtic.

He said yesterday that he was "aware of the speculation surrounding my shareholding. I have had inquiries from various parties. My feeling remains the same, that the best plan for Celtic is to make shares available at some point next year to the existing shareholders and season ticket holders in the first instance."

Speculation in the City helped push Celtic's share price up 45p to 307.5p, adding £12.9 million to the club's market value.

McCann has said repeat-

edly that he wants to sell up and return to Canada following the completion of his five-year plan to transform Celtic, which has included building a 60,000-seat stadium, the largest club ground in Britain.

Celtic plc said in a statement to the Stock Exchange yesterday that the Dalglish-Kerr consortium had requested a meeting with McCann but no formal bid had been made. While the club is valued at £77 million, it is believed that any consortium would have to bid around double that for outright control.

Analysts suspect that McCann might face the wrath of fans if he tried to engineer a corporate sell-out along the

lines of the proposed sale of Manchester United to Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB. But, if the consortium led by Dalglish and Kerr fails to find sufficient financial backing, McCann might find it easier to make a case for a corporate buy-out, having at least made an effort to find an owner with a sentimental link to the club.

Nonetheless Celtic might eventually fall into the hands of a media group. "Ultimately Rangers and Celtic will be key players in broadcasting in Scotland," said an analyst. The Celtic price tag is small beer for a group like Scottish Media, worth more than £430 million.

A spokeswoman for Soccer Investor, which specialises in football finance, said:



Kerr... wealthy star

"Rumours about this consortium have been going around for some time. They claim that they have City backing but there is not a lot of evidence for this. Prior to this year's agm it was known that Kerr was a member of the

consortium but Dalglish has obviously been brought in because of his connections with the club."

Kerr has estimated personal wealth of around £20 million and has been critical of McCann's handling of the club. Dalglish is also wealthy, following high-profile managerial jobs at Liverpool, Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United.

Dalglish, who played for Celtic between 1968 and 1977, would, it is believed, not only take on the role of owner and shareholder but would also be involved on the footballing side. He has already been linked with the general manager's post at Celtic following the resignation of Jock Brown. There are 32,000 season ticket holders at Celtic but only 10,000 fans are believed to be shareholders.

Don't cry for two blots on the landscape



Paul Weaver

ANY more sentimental eyewitness about saving the twin carbuncles of Wembley Stadium and I will be tempted to grab a yellow hat and the big bad ball and do the demolition work myself before some damn fool shape a preservation order on them.

Some tabloid newspapers, having run out of donkeys and red telephone boxes to save, and with Deirdre out of jail, have chosen to defend a bigger role of architectural offal than you could wave a Union Jack at.

Yesterday they carried nostalgic pictures of the 1923 FA Cup final, of the Matthews Final of 1953 and of the England World Cup win in 1966 and attempted to make an emotional link between these imperishable images and two jumps of 126ft tall ferro-concrete which would look much better on the wide streets of New Delhi.

For me the 1923 Cup final evokes images of vast crowds being expertly controlled by the white police horse Billy. The only thing I remember about the Matthews Final is Stan Mortensen's goals. From the 1966 World Cup there is Bobby Moore, boosted on the shoulders of admiring teammates, lifting the trophy, and the barmy, solitary, toothless jig of Nobby Stiles.

The Twin Towers do not enter any of these mind pictures. Instead they evoke only memories of an uncomfortable, user-unfriendly, poorly designed, dingy, flag-fluttering swindle of a stadium.

It looks good on TV. It probably looked good to Geoff Hurst, Gordon Banks, Kevin Keegan and Henry Cooper, who all defended the Twin Towers yesterday. But they viewed Wembley from a more privileged positional angle.

Wembley Stadium was dodgy and out-of-date when the Olympic Games were held there, and that was in 1948. Work on the stadium started in 1922, when Britain had not yet woken up to the realisa-

tion that it had lost its empire. The Twin Towers, useful if ever you are lost on London's North Circular Road, are a mocking monument to an Imperial past, when England passed the game of football and, if anyone did not like it, they would have a gunboat sent round. The Twin Towers truly belong to those bewildered people trapped on a street corner of history, their umbrellas blown inside-out by the winds of change. It is hardly consistent with a country bidding to host the 2006 World Cup and anyone who thinks differently should be shown round the magnificent stadiums of Spain, France and Italy.

Those who are creating the biggest din about Wembley seem unconcerned about matters on the pitch, that England may not qualify for the European Championship, that players bounce out of a club after a few games having been paid £50,000 a week, that the Football Association has lost its moral authority so completely that the captain of England can get away with kicking an opponent on the head.

A model of the Twin Towers and the entire stadium should be placed in a museum to remind us of the progress represented by the new, £146 million project. Anyone frightened of change should look at the much older Lord's, where the bulldozers have recently transformed a fine cricket ground into the most grand and stately in the world.

Even Matthews agrees. He said yesterday: "The Twin Towers have to come down. The important thing is the stadium will still be at Wembley. If it had been Manchester or Birmingham it would not have been the same."

AS Graham Greene writes in *The Heart of the Matter*: "They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous, because you couldn't name its price. A man open to bribes was to be relied upon below a certain figure, but sentiment might uncoil in the heart at a name, a photograph, even a smell remembered."

If patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, then sentiment is its penultimate stop. And if the Twin Towers need a new home they would look excellent at the entrance to my local tandoori.

FA to police crackdown on sleaze

Martin Thorpe

THE Football Association unveiled its "sleaze buster" yesterday as the governing body attempts to crack down on growing disciplinary problems within the game.

Football's "policeman" is Graham Bean, a 37-year-old detective constable, who is also chairman of the Football Supporters' Association.

tion and a member of the Government's Football Task Force. He will give up all three roles to join the FA on January 4.

His official job remit is to oversee issues of financial irregularities, drug abuse, racism, violent play and general misconduct.

The FA's company secretary Nic Coward said that Bean would not be "dominating a mac and hanging out in lay-bys looking for mis-

creants or demanding to look at clubs' books. We wanted somebody who knows his way around the disciplinary process and also knows the game."

Bean is not daunted by becoming a one-man task force, a role first proposed in Sir John Smith's report to the FA last year into the values, finances and reputation of football.

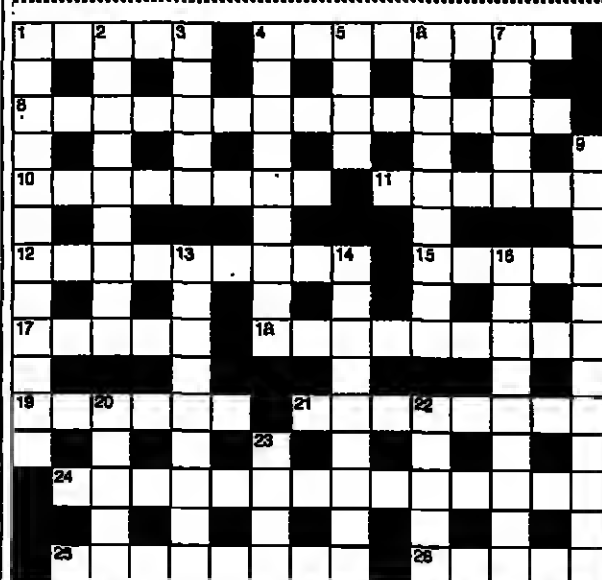
"I think we have seen over the past few years how

much work there is to do," he said. "I will not have an easy ride. Life in the football garden isn't all roses but some things tend to get blown out of proportion. I will not be reacting to media hype, speculation or fiction. I'll be waiting to get the facts in my hands."

"There is more pressure on the players and managers now than there has ever been, and after all football is an emotional game."

Guardian Crossword No 21,429

Set by Quantum



Across

- 1 What should be handled carefully about first part of play (5)
4 RA (real old boy) could be concerned with trees (5)
8 Rants wildly at structure change (14)
10 One student's floor-covering is in a state (5)
11 Craft zipped along? Only partly (5)

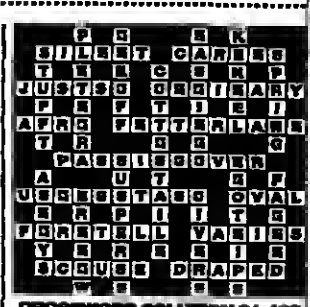
- 12 Boil a number of leaves? (5)
15 Sounds like some custom. O.K.? (5)
17 Non-English men at university to make admission (3,2)
18 Freedom and scope in the joint? (5,4)
19 Drink with Soot back in University site (5)
21 A short notice to pass on account (5)

- 24 Something to chew over? (4,3,7)
25 Machinery at top of mine could be old hat (5)
26 The way, certainly, to get eysores (5)

Down

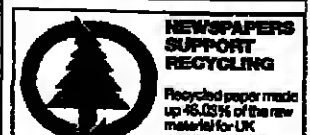
- 1 Reducing sound with carbon replacing sulphur? That's having no effect (7,2,3)
2 Halt car after accident by one phoney (5)
3 Ben is possibly responsible for the drama (5)
4 Native being AI or poorly (5)
5 Blow this off to make a killing (4)
6 Unpleasant din in the park (5,3)
7 A run out with mother's bouquet? (5)
9 Considers study patterns (12)
13 Gave explanation of money found in river (an old penny) (5)
14 Wrecked brig on block of stone or rock? (5)
16 Perhaps low and niggly—or with a feeling of satisfaction? (5)
20 An animal from low area around Kent? (5)
22 Shower curtains (5)
23 The party's drill to get the low-down (4)

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Canadian private called George Price bent down to pick up some flowers handed to him by children, took off his helmet and was shot in the head by a German sniper

02

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left to be its device, the world maintains a natural balance. The pressures of human development mean that today, Mother Nature needs 'helping hand 50,' in Europe and the UK, a legal framework is developing which enforces the concept of 'sustainable development'. As the regulator and enforcer of such policy in England and Wales, it's the responsibility of the Environment Agency to ensure that we can continue to enjoy an improving quality of life while protecting and enhancing the environment.

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Silent treatment

Why won't Woman's Hour listen to this young playwright? By **Lyn Gardner**

After one of her plays was performed in 1862, Aphra Behn, England's first professional female playwright, was so assailed by complaints about her sexual indecency, bawdiness and portrayal of women that she was forced to protest "I must not, because of my sex, have this freedom, but that you will usurp all to yourselves; lay down your quill, and you shall hear no more of me."

Three hundred years on, you sometimes wonder what has really changed. Earlier this week, an extract from Catherine Johnson's new play for the Bush Theatre, *Shang-a-Lang*, about three women hitting 40 at a Day City Rollers revival weekend, was

Not appropriate? For an audience of women? A play about working-class women, women of 40, with regrets, who are addicted to vodka, sex and

romantic love? A play about women in marriages that aren't terrible but which have gone off the bolt? A play about women who bolt? I think most women would find something in there.

ably have caused a little difficulty. Slang & s-lang contain a rather more explicitness than you expect in the Radio & Afternoon Play, although the theatre had suggested some suitable passages. But

Those images and the language of the exhibit accompanies them are also at issue in the theatre. After 20 years of consistent playwriting, we are only just beginning to see signs that women are writing what they want to write rather than what they feel they should.

book about women playwrights is to be published next year, says:

"The previous generation, those women who are now 40-50, felt that they carried a huge responsibility both in theatre and in life. They worried about creating positive images and representations of *desire*. A lot of those plays from the eighties served their purpose, but have had no life beyond. That's not true of the younger

generation. They are unfettered, have benefited from those women who went before, and are much more likely to just write exactly what they want."

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A Minute Too Late
Original members of Theatre de Complicite reviva their outrageous and hilarious take on death. One performance only, Old Vic, London SE1 (0171-454 5388), Sunday.

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(0151-709 4776), till Saturday.

have been greeted with puzzled looks because the claves to write about were, I thought, obvious and the sexual desire of older women. And would Sarah, Kinski played here, been greeted with quite as much outrage if she were a man? Maybe it's okay to write about gouging out eyes if you're a devil, made plain right like Shakespeare, but not if you're very much alive, unknown, 33 and female.

There is a double bind in this. If women want to see their work put on, they must be cautious of writing things that might frighten the audience away. And they also seek to find themselves in thrill to thwart the liberal consensus. "Think how we theatre-writers go and women in the past 20 years and

plenty of men, girls, young to old, not only my bad ones. The Larries of Johnson's Shag-a-Lang and the Marjones of Caryl Churchill's Top Girls, Mikeses

Johnson, violoncello

play they ended up losing."

Leavitt, who has just won the Theatre Management not Association award for best play for her very fine drama *Prozac*, has long felt "warehouse" behind. But if women in theatre are beginning to stop their real voices, in many ways they lag far behind those writing for TV. Lynda La Plante, Kay Mellor and Lucy Gannon appear to have felt far fewer than their counterparts in theatre.

Could this be because the audience for TV drama is far broader than a typical theatre audience, which is usually so much older and middle class? In fact, much more like a Rediff 2 audience. Shag-a-Lang is at the Royal, London W12. Booking: 081-743 3338.

September 27 | Monday

I want
to know

28 | Tuesday
your most
intimate
29 | secrets

Delivery will be made by the next week in December 1936

Arts Theatre



Ian McKellen left London lamenting the state of its theatres. There is, we are told, a real buzz outside the capital. So how do Leeds and Birmingham handle Russia's great poet of the provinces? By Michael Billington and Lyn Gardner

Chekhov would love it

an McKellen has been much mocked. His decision to abandon London for Leeds and question the nature of theatre audiences has been variously seen as a sign of insanity, vanity or skillful PR. But McKellen is right to ask who goes to the theatre. And the formation of the Chekhov Company at the West Yorkshire Playhouse to stage a four-month season of plays by Chekhov, Coward and Shakespeare reminds us that without permanent troupes, serious theatre in Britain will die. Even though I wish this particular company had a longer lease, it gets off to a flying start with Jide Kelly's excellent production of *The Seagull*.

Part of its success lies in Robert Innes Hopkins' design: he has created a universe where the birds are the audience and brings us close to the action. No less vital is Kelly's realisation that Chekhov wrote ensemble plays for solipsistic subplots: that his characters are habituated to each other's eccentricities yet suffer from an obsession with self. It is these qualities which make them both comic and tragic.

You see this clearly in McKellen's superb performance as Dr. Dorn: the family doctor on the Sorbi estate. Looking like Chekhov himself, McKellen plays Dorn as a provincial Don Juan, dipping his hand at a rakish Che-

lin, twinning his face with the handsome, young, and even using his left hand to hide his face from the audience. McKellen shows that the reverse of Dorn's lecherous is a paralytic fear of commitment: he wants to protect his daughter Masha, yet runs in terror from her mother's demands. But the true measure of Dorn's solipsism comes in his capricious description of Gennese street-life, as McKellen relives his Italian adventures, you sense the loneliness of the man most at ease in the anonymity of the crowd.

McKellen sets the tone without displacing attention from the central characters. Clare Higgins offers a maturely sensual Arkadina who relishes the role of scornful aristocrat but who is equally driven by self-absorption. She steps gaily round as if dancing round a wasp's nest, and when her lover, Trigorin, begs for his freedom, she drags him under the table for floor-pounding sex to prove her indispensability. Higgins even makes the sudden confession that she has never read a word her son has written, seen evidence less of heartlessness than of tragic isolation.

Every man — and woman — in Chekhov is an island; they may live in building intimacy with others but they rarely make spiritual contact. Two of

the best deconstructions of this came from younger members of the company. Will Kent's deeply vulnerable Konstantin, in his battered panama and frayed trousers, is visibly the neglected son who pursues his energy into creating unperformable artistic dramas. And Clare Swinburne's exceptional Masha is a rasping alcoholic doomed to isolation: every time her loathed husband speaks she raises her eyes to heaven as if wishing him dead.

Stoppard's recent Hamletless translation keeps the right Chekhovian balance between comedy and tragedy. Once or twice it strains for effect as Dorn somewhat improbably leaps onto the prostrate body of the dead Sorbi in his invalid chair; you feel

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Notes & Queries

Edited by Joseph Harker

If light from stars takes as long to reach us, and we see the stars as they were millions of years ago, how can we tell that they weren't extinguished long ago?

● It is highly likely that some of the stars we can see at night were indeed extinguished long ago. Stars can live anything from tens of millions to hundreds of billions of years. However, no information can travel faster than the speed of light, and this means that if the Sun (on average 600 light-seconds from earth) were to vanish, we would not know about it until over eight minutes after the event.

Fortunately for us, the Sun is only about halfway through its life, and it is not likely to undergo any catastrophic changes for at least another few billion years. The Crab Nebula, however, is the remains of a star that exploded in a brilliant supernova (as seen from Earth and recorded by Chinese astronomers) in 1054AD. The Crab Nebula is approximately 6,500 light-years from Earth, so this means that the supernova actually "occurred" around 6500BC. Earth "time" during the intervening 6,500 years (from 6500BC to 1054AD).

While the flash from the supernova was travelling towards Earth, prehistoric man would have been gazing at a star that in fact no longer existed. *Alec Clarke, Sofia, Bulgaria.*

● Only a very small fraction of the stars we observe in our galaxy are expected to go "blue" in the time it takes their light to reach us. However, in distant galaxies, such as those observed with the Hubble Space Telescope, we can see very hot, massive and young stars. These stars have a lifetime of a million years or so. Since these galaxies are so far away that light takes billions of years to reach us, we are fairly sure that these stars are not around any more. *Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, E1.*

Is there any scientific basis for regarding some colours as "lucky" or "unlucky"? Is this just a cultural convention?

● The juxtaposition of red and green causes difficulties for the human eye. The eye brings light rays to a focus on the retina but the focusing mechanism causes red light to fall slightly in front of the retina and green light to fall slightly behind. This means that the eye cannot see red and green together as a single colour. *Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, E1.*

Any answers?

Any answers?



within the British military supplying them with arms and intelligence. Plans would be drawn up for a military coup. If local forces were insufficient for the task, invasion and occupation by a US-led alliance would be the ultimate resort. This would be carried out in the name of "freedom" and "democracy" — as declared by the corporate media the world over.

This is no mere speculation. Take a look at the post-1945 history of Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Cuba, Haiti, Indonesia, Vietnam, Nicaragua, etc. *David Edwards, Bournemouth.*

In the hot weather my flatmate puts bread in the fridge. I say this is the last place bread should go. Who's right?

● Following David Jones' letter (Nimes & Quieres, October 7) I cut a fresh loaf to two, stored one half in a plastic bag in the fridge at 8°C and the other in a bygone bread bin at room temperature (20°C). Slices were then double-blind tasted by two assessors at suitable intervals. After one day, the bin-stored bread was definitely staler than that from the fridge. After two days, the tasting of the bin bread gave it as definitely stale and for the fridge bread the three tastings out of four registered it as fresh. Thereafter, each was more or less equally stale. But at 10 days, the bin bread had grown a mould, while the fridge bread was mould-free and edible, though stale. This "terrible new threat" to democracy the results quoted by Mr Jones and in accord with normal experience that chemical reactions in general, including staling, are slowed by low temperatures. *P J Rowland, London SE24.*

When my fiancé is in the room, no-one else — as long as I sleep in the same room, I don't have to worry about being bitten. What makes his blood so attractive?

● I think what the respondents say about Vitamin B (Nimes & Quieres, October 14) all depends on place and type of mosquito. On repeated visits to East Africa in the early nineties I took vitamin B supplements and had exactly one mosquito bite; working in Amazonia (1993-5), I took the same supplements, got heavily bitten and contracted malaria within the first six weeks! *(Dr) Alan Preece, London SW19.*

And another thing... Andrew Moncur

Prayer for the dying party

Today, as a contribution to the Spirit Zone, and in the belief that there must be a spiritual dimension to political life, this column is proud to present its New Conservative Prayer Book.

These uplifting words may be spoken whenever two or three Conservatives are gathered together, numbers permitting.

A prayer for the Government: Lord, please, please let this Labour Government fall flat on its face. Give us this day our Daily Telegraph. That will be all at present. Thank you. Carry on. Yours, etc. Amen.

A prayer for the economy: Blessed Lord, in thy great goodness, grant us, we beseech thee, a recession — even unto an slump in an crash. Let it so bite as to make thy people cry out against this ungodly government, which is an abomination in the eyes of the righteous (ie the Daily Mail). And let it, we pray, wipe the smug Scottish grin off the face of that Gordon Brown.

May it please thee that the squeeze should hurt voters in the Labour, Liberal and Lib Dem-40-in-from-Cons wilderness let them in! We'll feel their pain. Spare them not. But stay thy hand and smite not those living in such tiny seats as remaineth and other nice places in the home counties, so we may say "Blame not us, may we say 'Blame not us...'"

In thine infinite mercy, let not the full wrath of the recession fall upon thee chosen people in accountability and the other older professions and their like the plumb be felt by estate agents, fund managers nor such as have Audi-BMW dealerships.

Also, let not the temptations shareholders in Metropolitan Car-petings Balanced Growth (des- say) Unit Truists and those with pri-vate health plans. Protect especially thy servants — insert names here as required, eg: Anabel (daughter), Nigel (son-in-law), Rupert (dog) and Nanny (nanny), and so forth.

Rather, let the icy blast fall upon the ungrateful in Scotland and Wales and other wild places beyond the M25 and the light of thy countenance.

For thine is the United Kingdom, etc. Amen.

A prayer for British liberties: Gracious Lord, guard and protect the hard-earned rights, freedoms and liberties of the British sub-ject. Above all, safeguard his sacred privacy.

Unless, of course, he's gay. Thank you for your assistance with regard to this one. Amen.

A prayer for the family: Dear Lord, please let the Labour

Government come a whopping cropper over this family policy business. Give us, we pray, the chance to point the finger at them and say: "Yah, hoo."

Restore to thine own Conservative party to its rightful place as the party of the family. Well, the party of the nice family — with the Volvo estate and the Daily Mail "Cliff Richard is Fab" sticker.

A prayer for Europe: Preserve us, merciful Lord, from the heathen iniquity which is Europe. Cleanse, protect and defend us from the fleecings of Brussels and other cities of the plain, and the next election but one. Or maybe the one after that. Meanwhile, call ye the pound and cast down into the low places the stinky Euro.

If time permits, please also smite the Belgians. We ask this in the name of the adored Margaret. Much obliged. We remain, yours, etc. Amen.

Another prayer for Europe: Preserve, merciful Lord, your humble farmers and all our ram- field and great outbides from Europe. Fear, protect and strengthen our farm prices and our intervention payments from the public purse. Mangle farmers, let us have them we each.

But, Lord, keep us, we pray, safe from single parents, jobless per- sons, the elderly, the infirm and their worthless scroungers who grab money from the state. For there is an mighty sin and an terri- ble naughtiness.

You can say that again. Amen.

A prayer for the poor: O Lord, preserve us from the man- ifest wickedness of the minimum wage. For \$9.40 an hour is an mighty burden and tribulation to the money lenders and the masters set over our toiling people, yea even the price of a gin and tonic at the golf club.

Spare us from inflicting this further worry upon these poor hard-pressed persons, already burdened by share options and handshakes of brazen gold. For they are as camels and the mini- mum wage is like unto the last straw upon their backs.

At least, that's what they say. So it must be true. Yours, etc. Amen.

A prayer for such as are government ministers: Gracious Lord, we beseech thee, restore to us a ministry endowed with all the financial wisdom of Nor- man Levenson and the naval leader- ship of Cecil Parkinson.

We ask this in the name of the martyred John. Oh, yes. Amen.

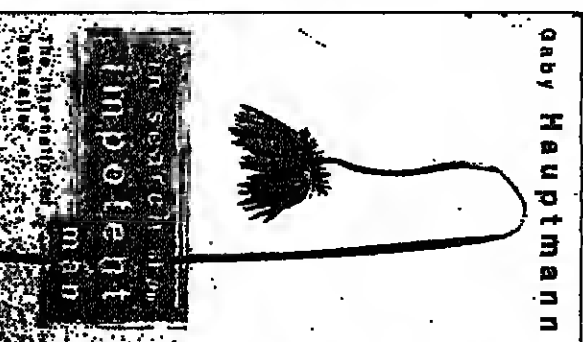
John 6:150

The idea came to her while watching a cluster of randy drakes chasing a lone duck on Lake Constance. Now her novel has sold more than 2.5 million copies

Gaby Hauptmann tells Maya Jaggi how the male obsession with sex started her search for an impotent man

Carmen Legge is 35 years old. She is a successful singleton, a woman who has long red hair, she owns a BMW, she has a vision producer, is clear about why she wants it, and she has a boyfriend. "I'm 41 years old and I had my first boyfriend at 16. That's a long time to go without a boyfriend," she says. "I don't want to compare it with other women. One thing I found in common was that if you're in bed and you don't want sex, and he does, then it's a big discussion. He'll say, 'You don't love me any more, or you're just not in the mood'. The next morning at breakfast, he'll have a long face. But the other way round, the woman says, 'I understand, you work so hard, have a beer and we'll talk. Men don't accept a normal no. They feel their whole personality is being rejected, that it's an attack on their manliness.' The novel exists as a satirical eye on the experience of Hauptmann's post-pill generation, far from protection from pregnancy may have removed one reason for refusing sex. Hauptmann says: "You have to say you're a headcase, but it's the wrong way. Women shouldn't have to explain why they don't want sex; men don't."

The idea was sparked by a succession of very serious magazine articles on male impotence, and by watching a cluster of male ducks pursuing a lone female on Lake Constance, near the Swiss border, where Hauptmann lives with her seven-year-old daughter, Walewka. "The five male ducks wanted to copulate and to compare it with other women. One thing I found in common was that if you're in bed and you don't want sex, and he does, then it's a big discussion. He'll say, 'You don't love me any more, or you're just not in the mood'. The next morning at breakfast, he'll have a long face. But the other way round, the woman says, 'I understand, you work so hard, have a beer and we'll talk. Men don't accept a normal no. They feel their whole personality is being rejected, that it's an attack on their manliness.' The novel exists as a satirical eye on the experience of Hauptmann's post-pill generation, far from protection from pregnancy may have removed one reason for refusing sex. Hauptmann says: "You have to say you're a headcase, but it's the wrong way. Women shouldn't have to explain why they don't want sex; men don't."



Last week it arrived in Britain, the perfect antidote to the trend for singletons that dwell on female anxiety

As Carmen falls in love and seeks a cure for what she had initially deemed an asset (involving an aphrodisiac dinner of cress soup and cinnamon ice cream), it is clear the novel is less in praise of impotence than of rethinking patriarchal sex — specifically penetrative sex — potency is a chance to stop being a cure for what she had initially deemed an asset (involving an aphrodisiac dinner of cress soup and cinnamon ice cream). It is clear the novel is less in praise of impotence than of rethinking patriarchal sex — specifically penetrative sex —



Turquoise woman... 'I'm not a man's quest for a man who worships her, and his penis.' She has become something of an agency aunt in Germany. Many women wrote to her about sex, she says. Hauptmann says: 'You have the impression every body is impotent, because they all want Viagra.' For her, the drug is a big boy, something a man wants for himself not his relationship.

occupies a far more important place in men's view of relationships than women. While Hauptmann celebrates the women's movement, has insisted sexually than the phallus or penis, she is not convinced that the 1970s that there is more to sex than the phallus or penis. She says: "For a man, potency is still power, force, a sign of himself. Women want sex but not only sex. Often it's great to have someone's arms around you, to be caressed. But for most men it's a starter; a man wants more after that, he wants to be satisfied." And while men see relationships "through a zoom lens", the novel says, women prefer a "wide angle". For Hauptmann: "Women look more for what we have in common — do we like the same music, the same sports. It's a big mistake. We look for a man for life, who's probably not a man for bed. Perhaps we should have two."

Though Hauptmann's generalisations, her assumption that women are different, can be wearing (a woman would talk first before fighting), it would seem plenty of women identify with Carmen's quest for a man who worships her, and his penis. She has become something of an agency aunt in Germany. Many women wrote to her about sex, she says. Hauptmann says: "You have the impression every body is impotent, because they all want Viagra." For her, the drug is a big boy, something a man wants for himself not his relationship.

Hauptmann may have found her own solution to the questions her novel poses. Separated from Walewka's father, she has a boyfriend in Frankfurt. "We are each other when we want; we don't want to be married. Let's, seven years later, be involved in motor racing, was in two minds about his girlfriend's writing project. At first he thought I was writing about him. Then he thought, 'The reaction surprised them both. They all asked for signed copies to give to their women. And maybe,' she adds hopefully, 'they'll read it themselves.'"

Heard about the drunk who cut off his own head? Jim White surveys the Internet awards that celebrate the world's weirdest fatal accidents

Dead from the neck up

In March 1997, near Krakow in Poland, a 30-year-old farmer named Krystof Arnsfeldt was drinking with friends when it was suggested they all strip naked and play some "men's game". This being Poland, the masculine activity they had in mind consisted of hitting each other over the head with frozen turnips. However, one man wiped the ante by grabbing a chainsaw and cutting off the end of his foot. Not to be outdone, Arnsfeldt grabbed the saw and shouted "Watch this, then!" He swung the saw at his own head, cutting it off. Later, by way of an epilogue, one of his drinking chums commented: "It's funny, because when he was young he put on the after-5 under-18, but he died like a man."

In earlier, simpler times, Arnsfeldt's death might have remained a matter of village gossip. But in the era of the Internet, news of the manner of his passing spun round the globe faster than something from the office of Kenneth Starr. It soon came to the attention of a group of comedians who travel the news wires in search of ridiculous deaths to consider for the annual Darwin Award, named after Charles Darwin, who reflected the fact that no matter how refined evolution becomes, the innate stupidity of the human being remains unsurpassed.

Arnsfeldt stormed the 1997 Darwin Award, though sadly was unable to be there to receive the award in person. Last week, the 1998 gongs were announced with some four-fifths over the Internet, the original set been to point out that Arnsfeldt's death is right as even, as well as prize for relatively dying. Two contenders received an honorable mention with the hope of better luck next time: Paul Griffin, from New Jersey, who, in September, was injured by a quarter-stick of dynamite that blew up in his car. He and his wife Bonnie were driving around at 2am, bored. So the couple lit the dynamite and been drinking with several friends when one of them said they have a person who had bought a jump from the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in the middle of traffic. The conversation grew more heated and at least 10 men twopped along the walkway of the bridge at 450 mph. Upon arrival at the midpoint they discovered that no one had brought a bounce rope. Bingham, though, pointed out a coil of cable lying nearby. One end of the cable

was secured around Bingham's leg and the other end was tied to the bridge. His fall lasted 20 feet before the cable tightened and tore his foot off at the ankle. He miraculously survived and was rescued by two passing fishermen. His foot was never located.

Three contenders, however, managed to fulfil the major requirement of the prize, and their deaths were duly acknowledged for their spectacular pathos.

There was the 41-year-old Detroit man who in September got stuck and drowned in two feet of water after squeezing head-first through an 18-inch-wide sewer grate to retrieve his car keys. In October, a 49-year-old San Francisco alcoholic, who was, according to his wife, "totally zonked when he ran", accidentally jogged off a 300-foot-high cliff on his daily run.

Last the judges he accused of pro-American bias, however, this year's Darwin Award again went to European German zoologist Friedrich Riedel of Paderborn.

Riedel, admittedly a lengthy bout of encephalitis suffered by Stein, an elephant in the charge, fed the animal 22 doses of natural laxative and more than a bushel of berries, figs and prunes. This was not enough, however, to cause any movement and Riedel, 46, decided to give the plugged-up pachyderm an olive-oil enema. This did the trick, though rather quicker than the keeper had anticipated. Stefan he fly with the keeper in the line of fire. Riedel was sufficed under more than 200 pounds of elephant.

The sheer force of the elephant's unexpected defecation, however, where he struck his head on a rock and lay unconscious as the elephant continued to evacuate his bowels on top of him," said Paderborn police detective Dirk Dem. "With no one there to help him, he lay under all that dung for at least an hour before a veterinarian came along and during that time he died."

The Darwin Award organizers have said they have no plans to invite Stein to America to receive his owner's trophy. They are obviously fans of Blue Peter.

سكنا من الامن